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THE CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE DESERVES RENEWED U.S. BACKING

(Updating Asian Studies Center *Backgrounder* No. 25, "Ten Years Later, Cambodia Still Bleeds," April 12, 1985.)

The recent talks in France between Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Vietnamese-controlled People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), and Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the mercurial leader of the anti-Vietnamese resistance coalition of Cambodia, once again trigger speculation about the conditions and date for the possible withdrawal of the 140,000 Vietnamese troops that have occupied Cambodia since 1978. In his State of the Union address last week, Ronald Reagan praised the noncommunist resistance in Cambodia. The State Department and National Security Council now should take their cue from Reagan's speech and design a strategy for increased support of the Cambodian freedom fighters. Such support would yield important dividends: it would increase pressure on the Soviet-backed Vietnamese forces to speed withdrawal; it would reassure the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) of continued U.S. commitment to the security of strategic Southeast Asia; and it would allow the freedom fighters to challenge the pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing armed movements in Cambodia in the event of a Vietnamese withdrawal.

Firmly Entrenched Communists. Cambodia's anti-Vietnamese resistance coalition, recognized as the legitimate Cambodian government by the United Nations, is composed of three factions: the anti-communist Khmer People's National Liberation Front, numbering 2,000 effective combatants; the 6,000-strong noncommunist Sihanoukist guerrillas; and the 40,000 pro-Chinese Khmer Rouge. These forces face a Hanoi-backed Cambodian army of 35,000, in addition to the Vietnamese occupation troops. While fighting has been subdued during the past year, communist forces remain firmly entrenched on Cambodian soil.

Overt U.S. assistance to the Cambodian resistance amounted to only \$3.35 million in 1987, with a similar amount expected to be appropriated early this year. In contrast, the Soviets have provided over \$3 billion a year for Vietnam and the PRK. The Chinese, too, have been generous, giving the Khmer Rouge guerrillas over \$1 million a month, including heavy machine guns, mortars, and surface-to-surface rockets. The modest U.S. assistance has been politely welcomed by ASEAN

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and the resistance as a symbolic return of active U.S. participation against communist expansionism in Southeast Asia. Yet, the waning of U.S. resolve to assist the Cambodian resistance has caused concern among U.S. friends in the region.

To demonstrate renewed commitment to a favorable negotiated settlement in which an anti-communist resistance will be able to play an effective role, the U.S. should adopt a more forceful Cambodian policy. This policy should include:

Increased support for the Cambodian resistance. Previous ASEAN efforts, with token assistance from the U.S., have been unsuccessful in helping the anti-communist resistance increase in numbers and capability. The U.S. needs to take a more active role in overseeing the flow of support to the guerrillas from staging camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. This would help to provide better small unit and demolitions training for the guerrilla forces and to increase technical assistance for their clandestine radio network, The Voice of the Khmer, which broadcasts into Cambodia from stations along the border. The U.S. also needs at least to double non-lethal aid to the Cambodian resistance to help pay for training, radios, mine detection equipment, and medicine. Funds also must go toward increasing the wages and rations of the anti-communist resistance; the communist Khmer Rouge guerrillas are paid twelve times more than their anti-communist counterparts.

Tougher U.S. economic sanctions against Vietnam. Since Vietnam's 1978 invasion of Cambodia, the U.S. has imposed a strict economic embargo against Hanoi, to be lifted only when Vietnam withdraws its forces from Cambodia. ASEAN, mainland China, and most Western nations imposed aid embargoes against Hanoi. This unified action has damaged Vietnam's already ailing economy. Hanoi last year tried to break the embargo by making its domestic market look more attractive to foreign traders and investors. To counter this, the U.S. must reaffirm its adherence to the trade and aid embargoes until Vietnam leaves Cambodia.

Pressure on Tokyo to change its policy toward Indochina. Japan leads the list of noncommunist countries trading with Hanoi. The U.S. should warn Tokyo that significant trade with Vietnam will only assist Hanoi in maintaining its hold over Cambodia and allow the Vietnamese to keep a formidable presence along the borders of Thailand. At the same time, the U.S. should encourage Japan, Korea, and other Asian nations to offer verbal and material support to the Cambodian resistance.

No longer should the U.S. consciously distance itself from events in Indochina. Washington should note the international support afforded to the Cambodian resistance. In October 1987, for example, the U.N. voted 117 to 21 for the removal of foreign troops from Cambodia. In addition, the hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees who have resettled in the United States strongly favor a tougher approach toward the communist governments of Indochina. Further U.S. indecisiveness will only play into the hands of Moscow and will leave the Beijing-backed Khmer Rouge as the only alternative if Moscow's proxies are forced to leave. It is time for the Reagan Administration to redress U.S. policy toward Cambodia and renew its commitment to the Cambodian resistance.

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