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## AVERTING A FAILURE OF U.N. PEACEKEEPING IN CAMBODIA

*Renegade forces such as the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia...continue to endanger the peace.... A primary task for American policy in the future will be to determine ways to work with Asian nations to form a broad consensus on how to reduce regional tensions and contain regional threats to security.*

Bill Clinton  
responding to a questionnaire from  
*The Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly*, October 26, 1992

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President-elect Clinton, you were correct to note as a candidate that there are still serious threats to peace and stability in Asia. After your inauguration on January 20, your Asian policy will face an immediate test: ensuring that the United Nations largest-ever peacekeeping operation succeeds in establishing peace and democracy in Cambodia. The stakes are high and demand forceful presidential action. If the U.N. fails and the dangerous Khmer Rouge faction regains control of Cambodia by force, repeating the slaughter of the 1970s, pressure inevitably will mount on the United States to reestablish order — just as it is doing in Somalia.

The U.N. effort in Cambodia involves about 21,000 soldiers and administrators from 44 nations, and may cost \$3 billion. The U.S. has pledged to contribute \$648 million and fifty military personnel. However, the U.N. may fail; its administration in Cambodia, called the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), is proving unable to stop military and terrorist attacks by Cambodia's two largest factions, the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese-installed government in the capital of Phnom Penh. This violence threatens elections scheduled for next May. Failure by UNTAC may lead to renewed warfare in Cambodia, to increased tensions between China, Vietnam, and non-communist Southeast Asia, and in the worst case, domestic and international pressure for the U.S. to take unilateral action.

By assisting UNTAC through a clear statement of your support for its important mission soon after January 20, you can help avoid all these disagreeable possibilities. To help preserve peace in Southeast Asia, you will have to exercise American leadership. Thus you should:

- Action 1:** Not equate UNTAC's success with merely holding elections. The U.N.'s success must be judged on Cambodia's successful transition to democracy.
- Action 2:** Press UNTAC to protect all electoral candidates from attacks by any armed faction forces. This can be done by stationing troops in areas where candidates are campaigning.
- Action 3:** Give direct assistance, such as newsprint and printing presses, to democratic forces in Cambodia led by Prince Ranariddh and former Prime Minister Son Sann.
- Action 4:** Prepare now for UNTAC's possible failure by warning China and Vietnam not to assist their respective clients, the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh government, and by preparing a strategy to provide economic and military material support to Cambodia's democratic forces.

## THE CRISIS IN CAMBODIA

Cambodia's current communist rulers in Phnom Penh were installed by invading Vietnamese forces in 1978. Over 100,000 Vietnamese troops remained in Cambodia to support their puppet government until 1989. This government now is led by Cambodian People's Party Chairman Chea Sim and Premier Hun Sen, both of whom are communists. Both defected to Vietnam from the Khmer Rouge, an especially violent communist party which took power in 1975 after a peasant revolution. The Khmer Rouge killed over one million of their fellow Cambodians. Memories of the Khmer Rouge plus the performance of the Phnom Penh government — political oppression, rampant corruption, failure to promote economic growth, and its identification with the Vietnamese occupiers — have increased the popularity among Cambodians of non-communist political movements led by Prince Ranariddh, the son of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and former Cambodian Prime Minister Son Sann.

After years of internecine warfare, these factions signed a peace treaty in Paris in October last year. In the treaty, the factions agreed to a cease-fire and to submit to an ad hoc international body, the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). UNTAC was to take control of Phnom Penh government's ministries of defense, finance, and communications, and to promote economic development. It also was to disarm 70 percent of the feuding factions' armed forces, provide security, and organize Cambodians for elections by next May to fill a new national parliament. The U.N. peacekeeping mission comprises 16,000 soldiers from 44 countries, 3,600 police, and 1,400 civilians. Their salaries alone cost \$600 million a year, three times the budget of the Hun Sen government. The overall cost of the operation may be \$3 billion.

### The U.N. Is Failing

The U.N., however, is in grave danger of failing its two main missions: providing security and ensuring free and fair elections. One reason for this is UNTAC's failure to take total control of Phnom Penh government ministries like Defense and Interior. As a result weaker factions are prey to stronger ones. Adding to the problem, the U.N. has failed to disarm 70 percent of the Khmer Rouge and the Hun Sen forces. Only the non-communist factions of Sihanouk and Son San have been disarmed. In addition, most UNTAC soldiers have been kept

largely in urban areas and have not been sent to provincial districts where candidates will be campaigning.

But a far greater cause of the U.N.'s failure is the flagrant violation of the Paris agreement by the Khmer Rouge. They refuse to participate in next year's election and also refuse to allow UNTAC administrators into their zone of control, established as part of the October 1991 agreement. Khmer Rouge forces regularly violate the cease-fire; they have shot at UNTAC helicopters about twenty times since January, and this December 1, abducted six UNTAC soldiers for three days. The Khmer Rouge's 30,000 guerrillas, based mainly in their zones along Cambodia's border with Thailand, possess the weapons, ammunition, and training to re-conquer Cambodia.

Also opposing UNTAC authority is the Phnom Penh government. Since September, it has waged a widespread campaign of intimidation and terrorism against the non-communist factions. Government troops have been seen attacking provincial offices of the non-communist parties. And privately, the Phnom Penh government has asked UNTAC to delay the elections. The reason: it fears that given the opportunity, Cambodians may dump their government in favor of Ranariddh's and Son Sann's political parties.

## PROMOTING CAMBODIAN DEMOCRACY

As President, Mr. Clinton, you must act within the first month of your Administration to strengthen UNTAC. Your immediate action is required because elections in Cambodia are scheduled for May — less than 120 days after you take office. An election which helps bring peace to Cambodia is critical to stability in Southeast Asia, a vibrant economic region that is a growing market for American exports. Both the Reagan and Bush Administrations, with the support of congressional Democrats like Steven Solarz, the Democrat from New York, have given aid to sustain Cambodia's democratic forces. Your predecessor strongly supported the negotiations that resulted in the October 1991 peace treaty. President Bush agreed to contribute \$516 million of UNTAC's \$3 billion bill. He also pledged an additional \$135 million to support economic reconstruction in Cambodia, while Japan has pledged over \$150 million.

But more than money is needed. To assist Cambodia's transition to democracy, you need to take action. Thus you should:

**Action 1: Not equate UNTAC's success merely with holding elections. The U.N.'s success must be judged on Cambodia's successful transition to democracy.**

If elections indeed take place, but do so in an atmosphere of terrorism and intimidation, the stage will be set for further warfare between the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh government. Washington's goal, as well as that of UNTAC's, should be to help Cambodians establish a government in Phnom Penh which is committed to democracy and to free-market policies for developing the Cambodian economy. As U.S. President, your support for these policies will offer important and timely assistance to Cambodians who are weary of war, oppression, and corruption.

**Action 2: Press UNTAC to protect all electoral candidates from attacks by any armed faction. This can be done by stationing troops in areas where candidates are campaigning.**

You must insist that UNTAC forces protect political candidates and organizers, especially the non-communists, as they organize for the May elections. You must demand that UNTAC

send most of its soldiers to the rural districts where candidates need more protection. In addition, you must publicly condemn terrorism by the Khmer Rouge and by Phnom Penh forces. And you must make clear that Washington will deny aid to any Cambodian leader who is not elected freely and fairly.

**Action 3: Give direct assistance, such as newsprint and printing presses, to the democratic forces in Cambodia led by Prince Ranariddh and Son Sann.**

UNTAC is unable to insure a genuine political campaign largely because the Khmer Rouge refuse to participate in the elections and because the Phnom Penh government refuses to allow non-communist factions access to radio and newspaper media. The U.S. immediately should provide Ranariddh and Son Sann with such aid as newsprint and printing presses, and insist that Phnom Penh allow them fair access to radio stations.

**Action 4: Prepare for UNTAC's possible failure by warning China and Vietnam not to aid their respective clients, the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh government, and preparing a strategy to provide economic and military material support to the non-communist factions.**

Failure by UNTAC could lead to renewed warfare between the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh government. Such warfare could raise tensions between China and Vietnam, should each decide to renew support to their respective clients, the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh government.

Signaling U.S. intentions if UNTAC fails can help deter the Khmer Rouge and Phnom Penh forces from resuming warfare. To do this, you should direct your Secretary of State to warn China and Vietnam in private not to resume military aid to the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh government. Also you should seek to isolate the Khmer Rouge by warning Thailand that it must end the cross-border trade that provides significant revenue to the Khmer Rouge. Thai gem mining companies, for example, have invested \$120 million in Khmer Rouge-controlled areas. Finally, you should be ready to provide such material support as weapons and communications equipment to such non-communist Cambodian leaders as Prince Ranariddh.

## CONCLUSION

UNTAC's success rests on Cambodians' desire for a democratic future. America cannot give them democracy. As President, though, your support for UNTAC can help Cambodians elect a democratic government. This will greatly improve both their prospects for a peaceful future and Southeast Asia's continued progress toward peace and prosperity. It will also head off the all-too-real chances of renewed fighting in Cambodia which, in today's changing political climate, almost certainly would be attended by pressure on your Administration to take a leadership role in resolving Cambodia's thorny problems. Your prompt action will help prevent this from happening.

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