

Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) ✓

Washington, March 23, 1970.

Box 506,

✓ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969-9 April 1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

✓ 2 See footnote 1, Document ^{VN 225} (memo, HAK to RN, 3/19/70, re Cambodia)

✓ 3 There is a check next to this paragraph.

✓ 4 There is a check next to this paragraph.

APPROVED
FOR
RELEASE
DATE:
17-Mar-2010

EYES UNCL
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

VN 228/1



28 MAR 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT:

Proposals to Sustain the Present
Regime in Cambodia

1. On 22 March 1970, General Haig forwarded your request for a plan to sustain the present regime in Cambodia. We have outlined below a series of recommendations which we believe would assist in this objective. These are necessarily somewhat tentative in nature as our intelligence on the internal situation in Cambodia is not solid enough as yet to permit us firm judgments. We also make several suggestions for action by the Department of State since we understand your query has not been addressed to any other agency. 2

2. In essence we believe the core of any strategy devised to maintain the present government in power should consist of two elements:

a. Overtly, to the greatest extent possible, the present Cambodian Government should attempt to maintain a stance of neutrality. This is a course along which the present leadership is already embarked and is one to gain the maximum of international sympathy.

b. Covertly, we should work to support and sustain the present Cambodian Government by supporting its military effort against the Viet Cong in Cambodia and shoring up its position by the provision of covert economic and political support.

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This course, if it could be successfully pursued, seems to us the most likely to preserve the present regime against what will almost surely be a determined effort by the North Vietnamese backed by Communist China and the USSR to unseat it.

3. We have some covert channels to the present government [redacted] which could be used to develop detailed plans for clandestine assistance. [redacted]

[Here follows discussion of CIA's intelligence sources in Cambodia.]

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4. Our current information on the exact balance of forces in Cambodia -- information which would be essential to formulating realistic plans -- is thin. We have in the past concentrated on attempting to detail North Vietnamese use of Cambodia as a channel for shipment of arms and other supplies to the Viet Cong. Considerable progress has been made in this collection effort, particularly over the past year, but as a result we have not tasked our agents with reporting in depth on the Cambodian political scene.

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5. As initial steps in determining the best way to support the current regime, we believe we should send a senior CIA official on a discreet trip to Cambodia to make clandestine contact with our better placed agents. This would yield not only immediate intelligence on the situation there but would also reassure the leaders of the present government that the U. S. intends to provide them with discreet assistance. We think at the same time, we should move forward with all speed to re-establish a CIA Station in Phnom Penh with reliable communications by means of which on a timely fashion, we can report intelligence and convey messages to our agents and the Cambodian Government.

6. The most immediate pressing need of the Cambodian Government will almost certainly be military assistance. We assume that the Chinese and Soviets will suspend military aid until the present government makes drastic concessions or is overthrown by one more friendly to the Communists. In these circumstances the Cambodian leadership will need desperately an alternative supply of military weapons. There are Cambodian airfields to which deliveries could be made clandestinely by aircraft flying out of Thailand and South Vietnam. They will also almost certainly need some sort of economic assistance and some quiet political help. All three of these aspects could be explored with our contacts.

7. In summary, we recommend the following steps:

a. We send an experienced Agency officer as soon as possible to Phnom Penh on a trip to make contact with [redacted] controlled agents within the Cambodian Government. This officer would collect information on the current situation

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and could convey such assurances as you wish to the new leadership. ³

b. Establish a CIA Station in Phnom Penh with rapid and secure radio communications to replace the present commercial channels used by the Embassy.

c. Issue a United States Government statement supporting independence and neutrality of Cambodia and expressing sympathy with the Cambodian efforts to remove North Vietnamese intruding troops from their soil.

d. Develop a worldwide clandestine propaganda effort to support the present government and call attention to the flagrant violation of Cambodian territory by the North Vietnamese. Also seek to discredit Sihanouk's effort to create a government in exile. ⁴

8. Providing Cambodia's response to our effort is positive, we recommend the following additional steps:

a. Develop a clandestine airlift to supply the Cambodian Army with necessary weapons.

b. Develop a clandestine combat control center to coordinate Cambodian military activities with the allied military effort.

c. Provide financial assistance to the new government.

d. Through diplomatic means stimulate international support for the new regime. Encourage Thailand

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to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cambodia.
Pursuade South Vietnam to issue a declaration recognizing
Cambodia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
Pursuade governments which have not yet recognized
the new regime to do so.

9. The above is a quick response to your request. If you
believe these suggestions have merit we can flesh them out in more
detail.

Dick

Richard Helms
Director

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