

Approved For Release

25X1

2008/02/15 :

CIA-RDP85T00875R001100010

De

Approved For Release

2008/02/15 :

CIA-RDP85T00875R001100010

**Top Secret**

25X1



DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

CRS/DPSD/DSR/000000

25X1

*Developments in Indochina*

TOP SECRET  
APR 15 1973

State Dept. review completed

25X1

**Top Secret**

25X1

10 April 1973

**Page Denied**

25X1

10 April 1973

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA*(Information as of 1500)*Page

## CAMBODIA

1

Sihanouk's appearance in Hanoi and the attention he is receiving provide the clearest indication to date that the North Vietnamese are willing to support his return to a position of power in Cambodia. Hanoi apparently is calculating that the deteriorating situation inside Cambodia improves the chances that negotiations with Sihanouk will eventually prove acceptable to Phnom Penh.

## SOUTH VIETNAM

4

The shutdown this past weekend of truce supervisory helicopters will probably make it even more difficult in the future to arrange effective international inspection of Communist-held areas. Thieu's efforts to shake up his government in order to make it more politically effective should have an impact in rural areas where the Communist threat is greatest.

## LAOS


7

Significant progress has been made in negotiating the shape of the new government and some Lao politicians are saying that a new coalition may be formed within a month.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

10

The French are preparing to raise their relations with both Hanoi and Saigon to the ambassadorial level. They continue to seek ways to reinstate French influence in Indochina.

  
CAMBODIASihanouk Resurfaces

Late last week Prince Sihanouk moved back into his favorite spot--the political limelight. After being out of the public eye for almost two months, Sihanouk reappeared in Hanoi on 6 April claiming to have made a one-month tour of the "liberated zone" in Cambodia.

Whether he made the trip is academic. In practical political terms, the primary significance of this affair lies in its being used by the North Vietnamese to reinforce Sihanouk's claim as Cambodia's "legitimate" chief of state. The attention that he is now receiving in Hanoi is the clearest indication to date that the North Vietnamese are willing to support Sihanouk's return to a position of power in Cambodia. Hanoi apparently is calculating that the deteriorating situation inside Cambodia improves the chances that Phnom Penh will eventually accept negotiations with Sihanouk. Even in the absence of negotiations, the new line helps convey an impression of Khmer Communist unity and legitimacy.

Of equal importance is Sihanouk's contention that the trip enabled him to obtain the unreserved political support of Khmer Communist leaders in Cambodia. On 9 April, Sihanouk referred to his trip as a turning point in the Cambodian conflict because he was able for the first time to meet with the insurgent leaders in Cambodia and win their support. Consequently, he said, he is fully entitled to speak and act for the Khmer Communists in international matters.

Sihanouk indicated that in the process of obtaining the Khmer Communists' backing he helped reduce factionalism within the insurgency. He contended that his visit led to a political "marriage"

10 April 1973

25X1

between royalist and Communist elements under the banner of his "National United Front of Cambodia." He added that the old monarchy is now purely a symbol, but that it offers the "revolution" a solid juridical base of "legality" as a state. Sihanouk also acknowledged that the Khmer Communists would hold the majority in any future government.

Along with the Khmer Communists, the former Cambodian leader also repeated his refusal to accept any compromise with the Lon Nol government, any cease-fire, or any "peace conference." In this context, Sihanouk called on foreign countries to sever relations with Phnom Penh and recognize his "government."

On the military side, Sihanouk stressed that his "army" is an "independent force," totaling 120,000 "effectives." (This is an obvious exaggeration. The current US estimate of insurgent strength is 40,000-50,000.) Despite his military boasting, Sihanouk played down the possibility of a direct assault on Phnom Penh. He claimed that, because of US air support, it would be better to wait in the expectation that the Lon Nol government will collapse from within. Sihanouk also quoted Chinese Premier Chou En-lai as saying that no new military aid deliveries would be made to the Khmer Communists because such deliveries are banned by the Paris Agreement. He noted, however, that Peking and Hanoi had given the Khmer Communists enough military aid before the agreement was signed in January to allow them to continue fighting until 1975.

During his lengthy absence, there was widespread speculation that Sihanouk was visiting Cambodia, but conclusive evidence to substantiate his journey is lacking. A Khmer Communist rallier from the Angkor Wat area told his Cambodian Army interrogators that Sihanouk arrived at the temple complex in mid-March. Sihanouk stated that he met with

10 April 1973

25X1

[REDACTED]

Khmer Communist leaders at Angkor on 23 March. Assuming that he began his return trip to Hanoi shortly thereafter, he would have been hard pressed to journey overland to a point near the Vietnam-Cambodia border by 6 April, when he supposedly boarded a plane for Hanoi.

25X1

25X1

[REDACTED]

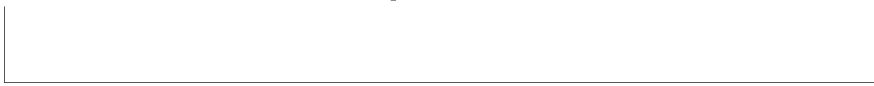
Aside from this tenuous evidence, there is Sihanouk's own colorful description of his journey across the isolated and sparsely populated northern provinces of Stung Treng, Preah Vihear, and Siem Reap. The pleasure-loving prince did not overdramatize the rigors of the trip--a fact that gives his account a ring of truth. According to Sihanouk, he, his wife, and key Khmer Communist official Ieng Sary traveled in a convoy of 20 Soviet jeeps accompanied by 150 North Vietnamese. In addition to communications and medical facilities, Sihanouk said that he was provided with one of North Vietnam's finest chefs. This prompted the sybaritic Sihanouk to add that while he "traveled Soviet," he "ate French." When they are available, an examination of the photos, movies, and recordings that reportedly were made will help verify the trip and perhaps, shed new light on the identities of the shadowy Khmer Communist leadership.

25X1

25X1

10 April 1973

25X1



SOUTH VIETNAM

The Shootdown and the ICCS

The shootdown this past weekend of an ICCS helicopter in Quang Tri Province will probably make it even more difficult to arrange effective international inspection of Communist-held areas.

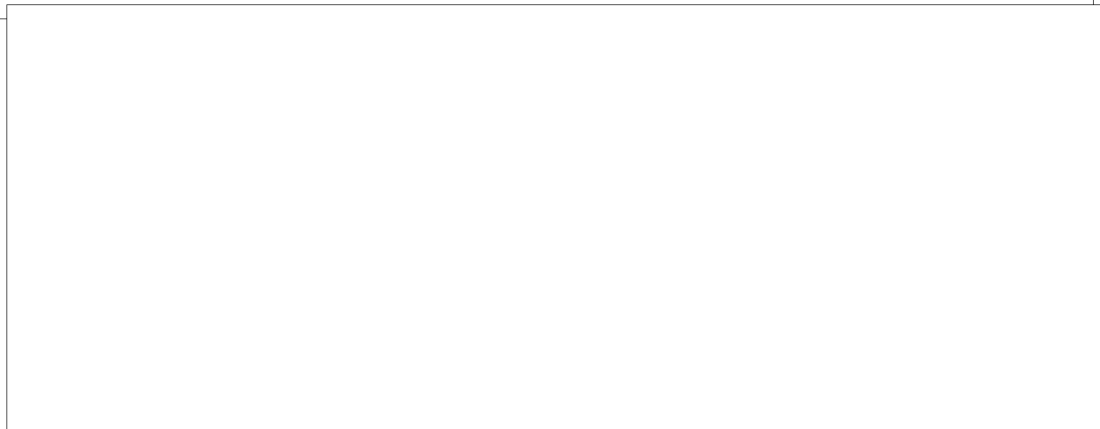
The Communists claim that the "unfortunate accident" occurred because the two ICCS helicopters flying along Route 9 toward Lao Bao deviated from their flight plan, but this has not been established.

25X1

25X1

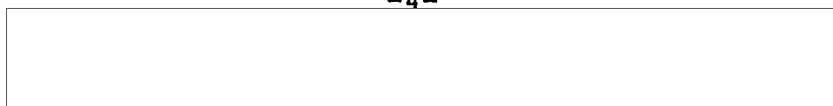


25X1



The Communist edginess over aerial penetration of their sensitive border areas has also been reflected in the pattern of ground fighting recently. In recent weeks, the most consistent combat has occurred in the Song Bo Valley northwest of Hue, around the Tonle Cham Ranger camp in Tay Ninh Province, astride the Saigon River corridors, and at border entry points in the

10 April 1973



25X1



[REDACTED]

delta, such as Hong Ngu on the Mekong River just inside the Cambodian border. Some of the fighting is intended to divert government attention from the infiltration of supplies and men, but much of it suggests that the Communists are bent on eliminating any remaining South Vietnamese troops in these areas.

The ICCS shutdown, along with the firing on a Joint Military Commission helicopter in the delta on 9 April, will further inhibit ICCS inspection efforts in Communist-controlled areas. On the other hand, it may induce the Communist members of the ICCS to lean a bit harder on the Vietnamese Communists. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

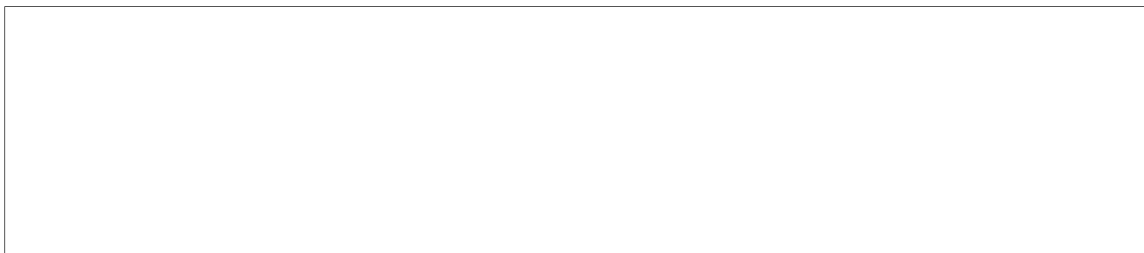
Government Shake-up

The Thieu government is undergoing personnel and organizational changes designed to make it more effective against the Communists as well as to further solidify President Thieu's control. Senator Nguyen Van Ngai, a political ally of Thieu and one of the key organizers of the government's Democracy Party, has been appointed minister of rural development. Ngai replaces Cao Van Than, who retains his other hat as agriculture minister. Than's ministry has been directed to focus more sharply on agricultural development.

Thieu has been stressing the need to improve the government's performance in rural areas because the Communist threat is greatest there. Ngai's appointment is part of this effort; his ministry controls a nationwide network of officials who have direct and regular contact with the people. [REDACTED]

25X1

10 April 1973



In another step to offer improved official guidance, Democracy Party members will receive training at the Rural Development Ministry's National Training Center. A presidential aide has indicated that the first group, including deputy province chiefs, will attend a training program later this month. Thieu paved the way for this program not only by appointing Ngai, but also by replacing the training center's politically independent director, Colonel Nguyen Be, with a government supporter. According to the US Embassy, at least one province chief plans to use rural development officials extensively in the village council elections scheduled for later this spring.




10 April 1973



  
LACSMore Grumbling From the Right

Government and Communist negotiators have made significant progress in negotiating the shape of the new government. Some Lao politicians are saying that a new coalition may be formed within a month even though the Communists continue to take a tough line on military matters and insist that these cannot be separated from the political aspects.

The Lao rightists, who registered vehement but futile opposition to the peace agreement of 22 February, are now focusing their concern on this tentative political arrangement.



25X1

Trouble is also brewing in the National Assembly where members are preparing to challenge Souvanna's handling of negotiations. They sense an opportunity to gain leverage because of the King's insistence on strict compliance with the constitution. The King's exact intentions are unclear, but he apparently wishes the Assembly in some manner to approve any political arrangements agreed upon with the Communists before he gives his necessary assent.

The delay in implementing the 22 February agreement has given the rightists an opportunity

10 April 1973

[REDACTED]

to regroup and attempt to develop a common front on the makeup of the new government. But it has also given Souvanna time to take conciliatory steps to avoid a messy confrontation. He has:

--decided to send his trusted subordinate Pheng Phongsavan to "consult" with the Assembly on the current negotiations.

--made new efforts to assure the King that the Lao Constitution, and therefore the King's own position, will be protected.

--given Ngou Sananikone, a leader of a very powerful right-wing faction, a significant role in working out details of the political settlement.

--consulted closely with Lao Army generals about the government's position on Communist military demands.

In addition, his supporters have already begun lobbying on his behalf. Vang Pao, for example, recently met with several members of the Assembly to seek assurances of support for Souvanna.

These measures to head off rightist opposition may prove insufficient, particularly if Souvanna believes it necessary to make some painful compromises to get the Communists into the government. In this case, he will again turn to the foreign embassies in Vientiane for support. He can count on the French to talk to their contacts in the military and the Assembly, as well as on the Soviets and Chinese for expressions of support. As always, however, he will depend mainly on the US.

Faced with strong foreign support for Souvanna, the rightists would probably once more reluctantly fall in line. They could be expected, however, to

10 April 1973

-8-

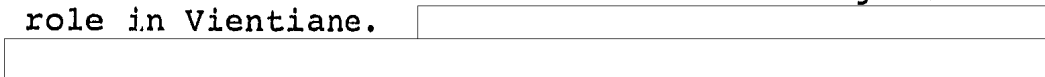
25X1



continue to snipe at the Communists and obstruct their activities in a new coalition government. Their longer term adherence to an agreement will depend on their perception of the depth of the US support for the coalition and the willingness of the Pathet Lao to live with a continued rightist role in Vientiane.

25X1


25X1



10 April 1973

25X1



  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTSCurrent French Views on Vietnam

Paris continues to watch developments in Indochina and to seek ways to restore French influence there. The French are preparing to raise their relations with both Hanoi and Saigon to the ambassadorial level, and like some of Hanoi's other recent suitors they are probably being pressed by the North Vietnamese to extend some sort of recognition to the People's Revolutionary Government as part of the same package. The North will not insist the French grant full diplomatic relations to the Southern Communists, however, and Paris is considering granting delegation-general status to their representatives in Paris.

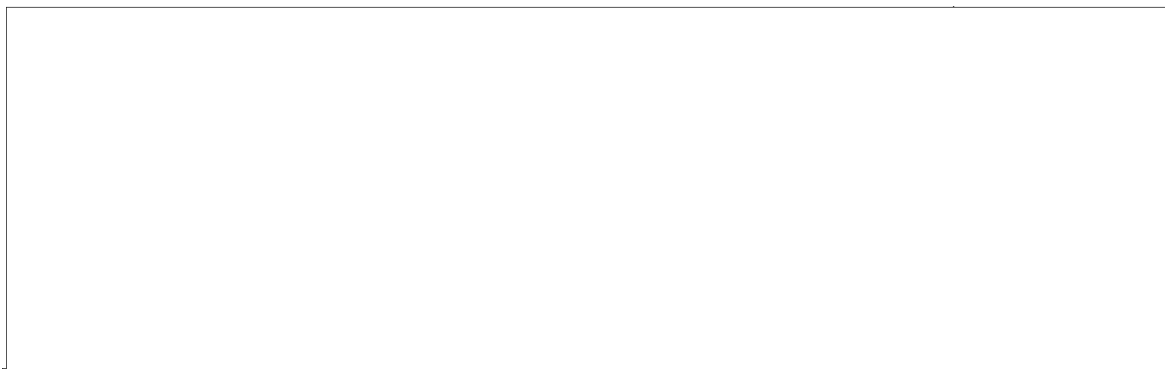
  
25X1

10 April 1973

25X1

-10-

25X1



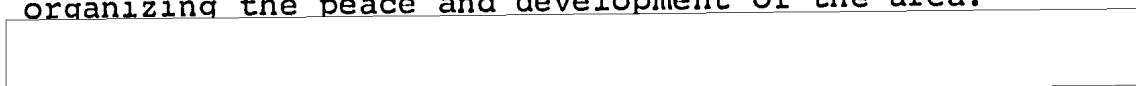
25X1

French officials obviously intend to be as free as ever with their advice to the various participants in the conflict. Essentially the French seem to be angling for some sort of a mediating role, in the belief that they thereby give themselves as much leverage as possible and also stay in substantive contact with all sides.

In the field of economic aid the French seem to be moving more deliberately on Vietnam than are some other European Community members. The French have discussed long-range aid plans with Hanoi, but no specific commitments are known to have been made known so far. They have earmarked \$400,000 for hospital repairs and may end up dividing \$30 to \$40 million between the two Vietnams.

Paris has indicated that it plans to emphasize bilateral programs, because of Hanoi's known preference and because of its traditional preference for bilateral arrangements on both the political and economic levels. Nevertheless, a multilateral program in an EC framework might also appeal to Paris, since it is consistent with De Gaulle's 1966 speech in Phnom Penh that called for "an international arrangement organizing the peace and development of the area."

25X1



10 April 1973

25X1