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PART I

Cambodian Resistance Goes on Offensive

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BANGKOK, Thailand—The Cambodian resistance movement, although troubled by division, has stepped up its attacks against Vietnamese troops deep in Cambodia during the last two months, according to military and diplomatic analysts.

"They have become more of a guerrilla force," a Western diplomat here said.

There was no alternative. Driven from their base camps along the Thai border by the Vietnamese dry-season offensive last winter, the Cambodian factions had to carry their operations into the interior in order to maintain credibility.

Intelligence reports of guerrilla attacks behind Vietnamese lines appear to have been confirmed by a

radio broadcast last week by the Hanoi-installed government in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital.

The broadcast said that civilians in the Phnom Penh area are being mobilized into "people's defense forces" to help army regulars and militia units with "patrol and guard duties, particularly during the curfew hours, in the streets, along the rivers and the major communications lines, and at entries and exits of the city to contribute to the safety of important party and state" installations.

Prasong Soonsiri, head of the Thai National Security Council, said Phnom Penh "and its vicinity are no longer safe."

No attacks have been reported inside the capital, but the Khmer Rouge, one of the three guerrilla factions, announced recently that its forces had killed five Vietnamese soldiers in an attack July 30 on

the town of Vat Ang, 18 miles west of Phnom Penh.

There was no confirmation, but Vietnamese helicopter gunships have been reported operating against guerrillas about 25 miles from the city, according to Western intelligence. Phnom Penh is about 150 miles from the Thai border.

The Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, estimated at 160,000 or more men, have put pressure on the guerrillas with a series of sweeps through their infiltration areas. In late May and early June, the search-and-destroy operations were carried out in northwestern Cambodia.

More recently, the diplomat said, Vietnamese troops have been reported sweeping areas farther south, closer to the approaches to Phnom Penh. Large Vietnamese units, up to 1,200 men, are involved, he said.

The stepped-up guerrilla operations are continuing despite problems of coordination among the three resistance factions.

The Khmer Rouge is the largest and most active of these guerrilla forces. A Communist movement, it ruled Cambodia in brutal fashion from April, 1975 to December, 1978, when it was driven from power in the Vietnamese invasion that installed the client regime of Heng Samrin.

This year's fighting has led to greater guerrilla activity by the two non-Communist wings of the resistance movement: the Khmer People's National Liberation Front of former Premier Son Sann and the National Army of Sihanoukists, led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's deposed head of state.

U.N. Recognition

The three factions are nominally combined as the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, another name for Cambodia. The United Nations recognizes this loose alliance as Cambodia's legitimate government.

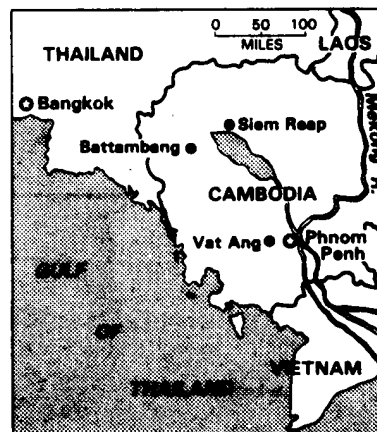
In past years, the non-Communist factions operated close to their border bases. With all three factions now pressing to carry the fight to the interior, "we are stepping on each other's toes," Abdul Gaffar Peng-Meth, a spokesman for the Khmer Front, said recently.

The conflicts go beyond crowding. Last month, Prince Sihanouk, who is president of the coalition, threatened to pull out his faction because of a reported clash between the Khmer Rouge and a patrol of his guerrillas, in which eight Sihanoukists were killed.

A few days later his son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, also expressed discouragement over the lack of coordination, and he called on China, Thailand and other backers of the coalition to force unity among its factions. "If things don't improve in two months or so, then I will pack my bags," the young prince said.

Crying Wolf

Sihanouk has threatened to resign as president of the coalition five times since it was formed in 1982.



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and his outburst and his son's might be discounted in that light, but the problem of coordination runs deep. As evidence:

—In late June, the Khmer Front and the Sihanoukists agreed in principle to set up a joint military command, but the agreement has not been carried out.

—Neither of the non-Communist factions works well with the secretive and independent Khmer Rouge. The three forces have a tripartite military committee designated to resolve frictions, but it is not a coordinated command.

The Khmer Rouge has about 35,000 guerrillas, against an estimated 14,000 for the Khmer Front and 8,000 for the Sihanoukists, according to Western intelligence.

The non-Communist factions say that at least a third of their troops are fighting in the interior, rotating from small bases near the Thai border.

The Vietnamese have deployed seven or eight divisions in western Cambodia to block infiltration, supported by two or three divisions from the Phnom Penh regime. The total force is 80,000 or more, all within 30 miles of the Thai border.

The guerrillas must circumvent a series of barriers—barbed wire, trenches and mines—established by dragooned civilian labor since last winter's border fighting. Despite these obstacles and their internal problems, the guerrillas have been able to harass the Vietnamese, ambushing patrols and attacking military targets.

Chinese Support Firm

China has shown no sign of reducing arms supplies for the resistance, the Western diplomat said. The guerrillas have enough small arms that they have been able to cache some in the interior for future forays, he reported.

The Vietnamese maintain security in the cities of western Cambodia. No major attacks have been reported in Battambang or Siem Reap, for instance. But for the small farmer of the countryside, life is lawless, and allegiance—if any—is given to those with the most guns.

"I don't trust anyone in Kampuchea," a Khmer Front guerrilla told a French reporter recently. "In each village, there is at least one Heng Samrin agent."

He said that patrols from the group rarely go into villages and pay for food if they do, but that the Khmer Rouge "start shooting to scare off the villagers first and then wait until the village is evacuated so they can move in and collect spare food stocks."

Military developments inside Cambodia are "a confused picture," the Western diplomat said. Guerrilla claims, particularly those of the Khmer Rouge, are generally considered exaggerated and cannot be directly confirmed.

However, the Vietnamese "are no better off than last year," he said.