

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

421

INFORMATION

SECRET/SENSITIVE

February 6, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: WILLIAM L. STEARMAN *WLS*

SUBJECT: Cambodian Situation

*Thanks,
BO*

Attached at Tab A is a DOD weekly report on the military situation in Cambodia, January 24-February 1. In addition to reviewing recent tactical events, the report contains the following significant points:

-- Khmer Communist efforts appear to be more cautious in their military moves and some commanders are exhibiting a certain degree of confusion and frustration, partly as a result of poor coordination among various battlefields.

-- The KC plan to continue the current indecisive fighting around Phnom Penh pending a major reassessment of their overall strategy. Meanwhile, increased diversionary attacks can be expected against GKR enclaves elsewhere in Cambodia.

-- The Communists thus far have failed to mount a major effort against Mekong River shipping. The Cambodian navy has made a strong showing in its river defense role. Meanwhile, the KC forces in the Mekong sector are plagued with persistent manpower shortages, logistics problems and poor leadership. However, Communist forces are expected shortly to renew attacks along the Mekong, but it may be too late for them to recover the advantage gained by the government.

-- Government stocks of rice, POL and ammunition appear adequate. There is a 24-day supply of rice and at least a 48-day reserve for all military fuels. Major ammunition stocks vary between 11 days for artillery, 12 for mortar, 13 for bombs and 17 for small arms.

OSD REVIEWED 15-Mar-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

DOS REVIEWED 16 MAR 2011 NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

1 FEB 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Cambodian Situation Report, 1 February 1974

(S-Sen) The Military Situation (See Figure 1) The heavy shelling of Phnom Penh with 105mm howitzers which began on 24 January continued on 25, 26, and 28 January. Recent reports indicate that about 300 rounds were fired, killing 75 and wounding 161 persons. Most of the rounds impacted in the southern sector of the city and in the vicinity of Pochentong Airfield. The worst of the 105mm howitzer shellings appears to be over for the present. However, the KC fired two 122mm rockets into the northwest sector of Phnom Penh on 31 January wounding 11 civilians. Indirect fire attacks from howitzers, mortars, recoilless rifles, and rockets on the Phnom Penh area and its defenses are expected to continue. Sensitive sources have disclosed that the KC may be moving 105mm rounds from the South--possibly Takeo or Kampot--to KC gunners near the Prek Thnaot River. The source also revealed that KC personnel have been instructed to purchase 105mm rounds from undisclosed sources.

(C) During January, Phnom Penh sustained a total of 50 attacks by fire, primarily from 122mm rockets and captured US-made 105mm howitzers. The KC fired a total of 457 rounds killing 104 and wounding 270 persons.

(S) South of the capital, FANK had made little progress in its efforts to reestablish Phnom Penh's southern defense line along the Prek Thnaot River until 30 January when small friendly elements succeeded in crossing the river. However, small enemy elements remain north of the river. KC reaction to the government's advance has primarily been limited to indirect fire and small-scale ground attacks. The KC have recently shelled only those government forces deployed along the southern defenses, which suggests that the 105mm howitzers used to shell Phnom Penh have been temporarily repositioned farther south, out of range of the capital and Pochentong Airfield.

(S-Sen) In the Mekong-Bassac corridor, the KC seized control of the east bank of the Bassac River on 28 January at two locations some three to five miles southeast of the capital and maintain control of a one-kilometer segment of Route 30 on the west bank. The northernmost stretch of river bank controlled by the KC is opposite Phnom Penh's industrial suburb of Takhmau and places the enemy within mortar-range of the Chak Angre Power Plant, the capital's primary electric power station. The increase in enemy offensive activity along the Bassac was probably prompted by criticism of the KC commander in the area and pressure from his seniors to support KC attacks against other areas of Phnom Penh's defenses. Sensitive sources reveal that the enemy plans to increase activity in the area and use attacks by fire to stop traffic between Takhmau and Chak Angre. Although government forces have been

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slow to react to the increasing enemy threat along the Bassac, a reinforced brigade has now been made available and is scheduled to commence clearing operations today.

(S-Sen) Northwest of the capital, FANK continues to hold the initiative against an estimated two to three KC battalions some four miles northwest of Pochentong Airfield. Sensitive sources indicate that the enemy intends to renew the offensive west of the capital to take advantage of the decrease in government troops in the area resulting from deployment of the one division to the southern defense line. The KC, however, have apparently not yet recovered from the setback suffered during their previous attacks in the same area earlier this month.

(S) Elsewhere, FANK cleared KC forces from a two-mile segment of Route 1 on 25 January. The KC maintain control over two segments of Route 5 and one segment of Route 4. FANK reports little progress in efforts to clear either road.

(C) On the Mekong, the 27 January convoy sustained two attacks by fire 10 miles north of the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. The attacks killed two and wounded four, but caused no damage.

(S) Although the KC have remained on the offensive throughout most of Cambodia, anticipated heavy attacks against Mekong River shipping have failed to materialize. The Mekong is the only surface supply route to Phnom Penh that has remained open this dry season. A large portion of the government's success in keeping the river open can be attributed to a strong showing by the Cambodian Navy. Riverine craft have been expanding their traditional fire support, logistic, and convoy escort functions, while at the same time, naval infantry troops have been landed at choke points along the river to improve security and preempt KC attacks. The army's 2d Division, along Route 1, and Khmer Air Force gunships have also played an active role in keeping the river open. Nevertheless, the communists have not been completely idle and have attempted on at least three occasions during this dry season to interdict Route 1 and bring pressure to bear on government river bank positions south of Neak Luong.

(S-Sen) Sensitive sources reveal that KC units along the Mekong continue to be plagued with personnel and ammunition shortages and are also suffering from poor leadership. The source revealed that the KC commander in the area has been reprimanded for failure to increase attacks against convoys. These weaknesses probably reflect the communists' war-weariness and frustration with the turn of events in this area. Last dry season, KC Mekong River forces initially bore the brunt of the offensive and, suffered heavy losses from concentrated US air strikes. Moreover, the focus of the KC logistic and military effort--along with priorities for weapons, ammunition, and new recruits--shifted to the west of Phnom Penh during the last year.

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(S-Sen) Sensitive sources now indicate that KC commanders to the east of Phnom Penh will meet soon to try and resolve some of their difficulties. A rejuvenated KC strategy along the Mekong--aided by a receding river which is rapidly approaching its dry-season low--will likely give rise to increased KC interdiction attempts during February. On the other hand, it may already be too late for the enemy to recover the advantage gained by the government in this sector.

(S) Khmer Air Force sorties for the period 25-31 January 1974 reported in the USDAO Cambodia DAMSREP are shown below:

	<u>Tac-Air</u>	<u>Gunship</u>	<u>Heli-copter</u>	<u>Air-lift</u>	<u>Liaison/Recon</u>	<u>Total</u>
Attack	326	115	116	0	0	557
Combat Support	2	7	300	134	61	504
Other*	<u>95</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>174</u>
Total	423	161	442	148	61	1,235

(See Figure 2 for Trends)

*Includes training, administrative and cross-country flights.

Status of Critical Stocks.

(S) A Mekong convoy arrived in Phnom Penh on 27 January with rice, ammunition, and POL. A two-ship special convoy with an unknown quantity of POL and ammunition is expected to arrive in the capital today. The next convoy is scheduled for 4 February.

(S) Government rice stocks are now at an estimated 34-day level.

(S) The estimated status of essential POL stocks is as follows:

<u>Product</u>	<u>Consumer</u>	<u>Days Supply</u>
Motor Gas	Military	69
	Civilian	19
Auto Diesel	Military	73
	Civilian	38
JP-4	Military	56
AVGAS	Military	48
Kerosene	Civilian	3

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Industrial Diesel	Civilian	25
Power Plant Diesel	Civilian	33
Fuel Oil	Civilian	27

(C) Ammunition on hand in the Cambodian Central Depot as of 30 Jan 74:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Days of Supply</u>
Small Arms	17
Mortar	12
Artillery	11
Bombs	13
Rockets	22

The Outlook

(S-Sen) The KC appear to be more cautious--probably because of FANK's demonstrated ability to move reinforcements between fronts--but have probably not completely abandoned attempts to penetrate Phnom Penh's defenses. At the same time, recent reports from sensitive sources point to a continuation of the currently indecisive fighting around the capital's perimeter while the KC reassess their overall strategy. Coordination between the various battlefields is still noticeably lacking, and a certain degree of confusion and frustration is being exhibited by some KC commanders. Meanwhile, an increase in attacks on outlying provincial capitals can be expected in order to tie down government forces and preclude their use in the defense of Phnom Penh.

MAP Orders

(C) The current status of MAP Orders issued for implementation against the FY 74 Cambodia Military Assistance Program is as follows:

	(\$ Thousands)
	<u>Ordered to Date</u>
Materiel & Services	\$196,147*
Training	<u>4,452</u>
Total	\$200,599

*Includes \$83,256 under the special FY 74 drawdown authority (Sec. 506 of Foreign Assistance Act).

MAP Deliveries.

(C) Military Assistance deliveries 24 through 30 January 74 consisted of 1 helicopter, 35 60mm mortars, 288 grenade launchers, 4,230 tons of ammunition, and other miscellaneous support items.

Robert C. Taylor
 Robert C. Taylor
 RGen USAF

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KC CEASE 105MM SHELLING OF PHNOM PENH

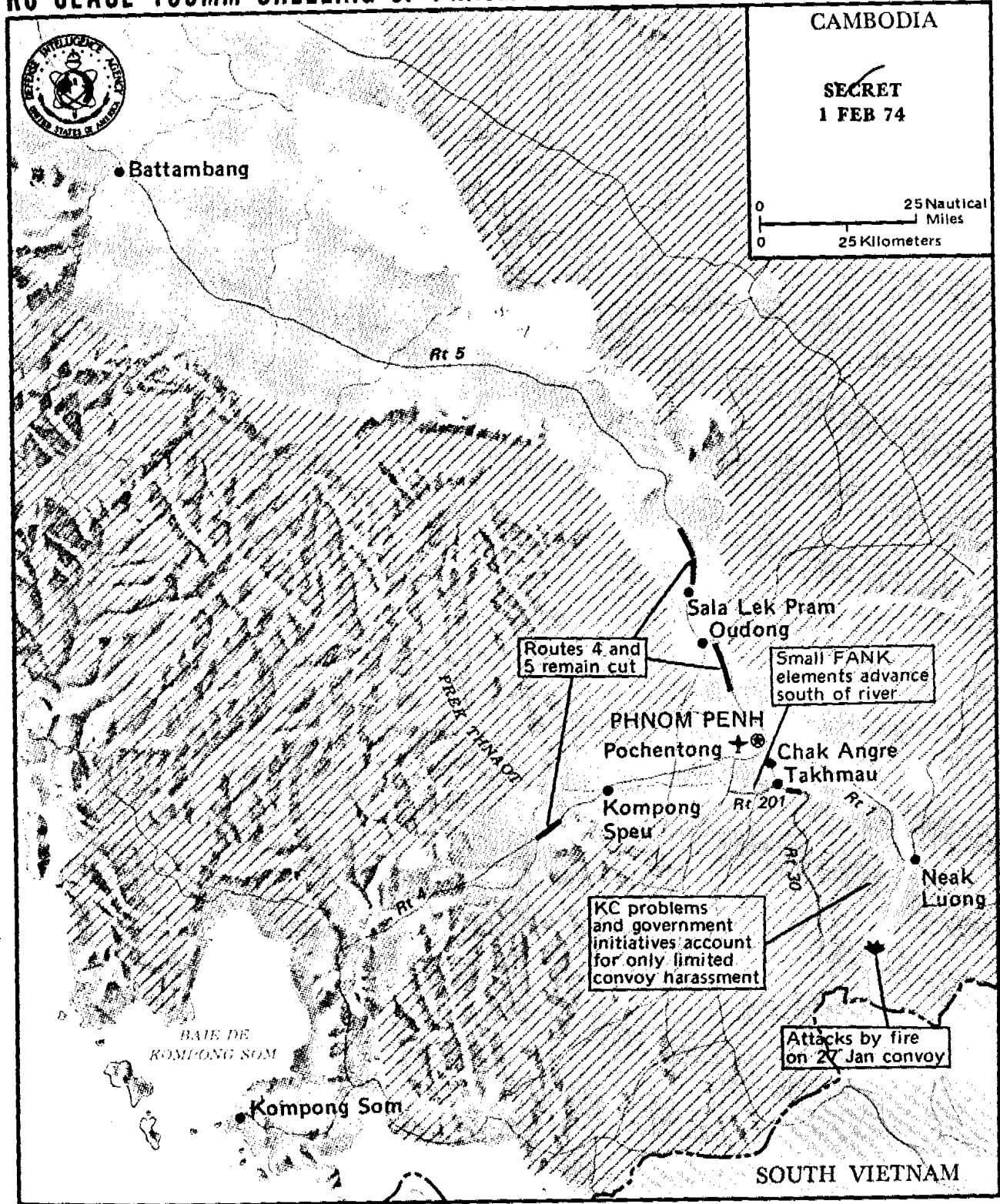


FIGURE 1

