

MEMORANDUM

## THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLYINFORMATION

May 6, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT <sup>HE</sup> THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

FROM:

GENERAL HAIG 

SUBJECT:

Reports from Phnom Penh by Politico-Military Counselor Ladd

We have received a number of reports recently from Mr. Ladd, our Politico-Military Counselor in Phnom Penh, containing information which I believe will be of interest to you. The highlights are:

-- The current political "crisis" in Phnom Penh, resulting from Lon Nol's resignation as Prime Minister and Chief of State Cheng Heng's efforts to locate a successor, has caused little or no stir among the people. The Government continues to function, and Ladd is confident that Lon Nol will retain some form of titular authority and that Sirik Matak, who acted for Lon Nol during his absence, will receive a post of importance.

-- Son Ngoc Tanh, the organizer of the anti-Sihanouk Khmer Serei movement which was the origin of the Khmer Krom troops, is edging up and will probably also receive an important post. (Some intelligence reports say he will eventually be Prime Minister.) In an interview with Ladd, Tanh expressed the opinion that:

-- Enemy forces opposing the FANK are weaker than a year ago, while FANK forces have grown in strength; there is no indication that the enemy will receive substantial reinforcement during the rainy season.

-- The FANK now needs to learn how to coordinate its growing assets and employ them professionally so as to be able to regain lost territory during the rainy season. Close strategic and tactical coordination between the FANK and ARVN is mandatory.

-- Ladd has sent in a separate report agreeing with Tanh on the FANK's improvements, as well as on its needs for upgrading the coordination and professional employment of its forces. Ladd suggests that this

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might be accomplished via advisers from third countries, for example, in the field of logistical support. He cautioned, though, that we ourselves must avoid trying to impose U.S. organizational concepts on the FANK, which as an "amateur army" would find them difficult to absorb.

Comment:

Ladd's report on the political calm in Phnom Penh is borne out from other sources. Whatever the political maneuverings may be, the attitude of the people appears to remain firmly anti-Sihanouk and there are no hints of any effort to restore him or to stop resisting the North Vietnamese.

On the military side, it is encouraging to find both Ladd and a highly-placed Cambodian such as Son Ngoc Tanh in agreement on the improvement in the FANK's performance. The fact that the operation which just succeeded in reopening the Pich Nil pass was entirely a FANK show is an indication of its progress. Nevertheless, it still has a long way to go before it can really pass over to the offensive. We are trying to encourage countries such as Australia to furnish the kind of technical advice which we ourselves cannot furnish.

There is one feature of the military scene which neither Ladd nor Son Ngoc Tanh would be expected to know: enemy forces in Cambodia, at least those opposing the ARVN in the Chup Plantation area, have recently received some reinforcements. We do not know the totals, however.

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