

Presidential
Correspondence

CTS-HK-AA-3347

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

2/12/69

~~1 HAK - Christ~~
~~2 Cambodia file~~

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not sent
as of 2/12/69
3:30 P.M. revised
LSE has, say
on his desk

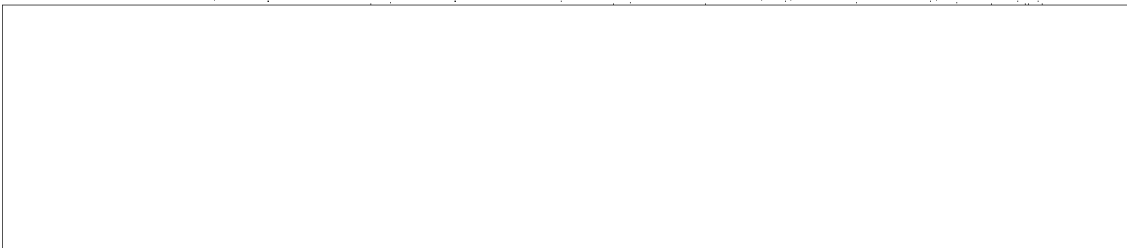
DOS, OSD, NGA
Reviews Completed

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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half, operations are authorized to a depth of 20 km. Washington approval is necessary for each mission in most of the southern area. Teams are instructed to avoid contact with Cambodians and not to fight VC/NVA elements except in self-defense.

13. Medium/low-level and high-level daylight aerial reconnaissance operations (DORSAL FIN and GIANT DRAGON, respectively) are currently authorized. DORSAL FIN operations cover the border area to a depth of 20 km into Cambodia. Thirty DORSAL FIN operations are authorized per month. GIANT DRAGON operations cover generally the area east of the Mekong but also include the area around Sihanoukville. Flights are prohibited within 10 miles of Phnom Penh.



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15. U.S. forces in SVN operating against the enemy along the SVN/Cambodian border are authorized in emergency situations to take necessary counteractions in the exercise of the right of self-defense. Counteractions may include artillery and air strikes against enemy firing from the Cambodian side of the border against US/RVNAF troops, and may also include maneuver by U.S. troops, while actually engaged and in contact with VC/NVA forces, into Cambodia when necessary for the preservation of the force. In such emergency situations, no Cambodian forces will be engaged except in self-defense, and no Cambodian villages or populated areas will be attacked.

16. Alternative Two - Increased military operations in Cambodia. To date the military responses of the U.S. to NVA/VC use of Cambodia as a sanctuary have been limited to monitoring the size, location and activity of these enemy forces. In addition, the U.S. military forces have responded with fire to attacks by fire from enemy forces in Cambodia. It might be possible to reduce this NVA/VC threat from Cambodia by undertaking preemptive operations against these enemy forces in their Cambodian base areas along the SVN border. Preemptive operations could include ground and/or air attacks of limited depth and duration.

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This course of action would be in keeping with the publicly expressed statement by Prince Sihanouk that US forces could engage NVA/VC forces in those areas of Cambodia where danger to Cambodians would be minimal.

17. Interdiction operations against the enemy's LOCs into Cambodia from Laos and into Cambodia by sea would assist in reducing the threats but not to the degree that striking into their base areas would accomplish.

18. Alternative Three - Neutralization of Cambodian/SVN Border - If there were a way to prevent military activity in the territory immediately adjacent to the borders it would deny to the VC/NVA the sanctuary which they now enjoy. One means by which this might be accomplished would be to establish a neutralized border area which is to be patrolled by an outside nation. It is apparent that this would be difficult to accomplish by taking the problem to the United Nations nor by involving the ICC. The USSR and its allies could hopelessly sidetrack such an effort. It seems it might be accomplished if the RKG and GVN jointly declared a strip of the border neutralized and subject to the inspection of a neutral nation which they would invite to station forces in this area for that purpose. RKG and RVN would be free to maintain their border posts and to conduct their normal administrative and governmental activities in this region, but they would agree not to conduct military operations in the area, except in self-defense. The neutral nation would establish observation posts and conduct helicopter and ground patrols to inhibit the violation of the area by any third parties. Our proposal to the Cambodian Government that they enter into such an arrangement should include a recognition of their sovereignty over territory within their borders, agreements to enter discussions concerning the re-establishment of normal diplomatic relations, and possibly agreement to enter into normal diplomatic relations, and possibly agreement to enter into discussions concerning increase of trade and other economic relations. In addition to these advantages which such a proposal would hold for the RKG, would be the hope that this program would remove from their national territory foreign military forces which pose a threat to their independence, i.e., VC/NVA forces which might turn against them should hostilities cease in Vietnam. It is recognized that the probability of achieving this objective is not high. Prince Sihanouk might find

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it unacceptable, but in coupling the proposals for recognition of his border and resumption of diplomatic relations with this proposal, we would truly test the sincerity of his position. It may also be difficult to get a neutral nation such as Switzerland or Sweden to participate. However, even if the attempt fails, the international political impact should be favorable and the fact that we have made such an effort will free us somewhat from the inhibitions which the international political climate already imposes on our efforts to combat the problem militarily. To remove economic considerations from the decision of a neutral nation we could offer to pay the costs and provide equipment. To improve the effectiveness of their surveillance of the neutral zone we could provide them helicopters and such technical devices as we feel we can allow them to use.

Conclusions

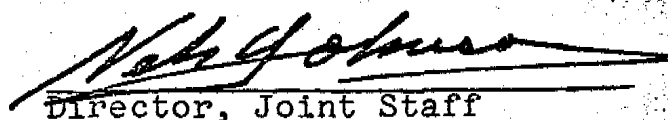
19. Positive efforts should be taken to exploit the expressed interest of Sihanouk to improve US/Cambodian relations toward achieving US objectives of denying or reducing VC/NVA use of Cambodia.

20. The full range of possibilities related to this problem has not been developed. Due to the gravity of the military situation, a more comprehensive study of US options should be made.

Recommendation

21. That, as a matter of urgency, the full range of courses of action appropriate to achieving the US objective in relation to Cambodia be evaluated prior to a decision to undertake a diplomatic action which implies a restraint or inhibition in any expansion of current operating authorities designed to protect our forces in SVN.


Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)


Director, Joint Staff

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