

SECRET/SENSITIVE

September 11, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM : John Holdridge/Tome Latimer

SUBJECT: CIA's Memorandum and SNIE on Cambodia

1. You asked about requesting CIA to comment on our comments (Tab B), and especially to square the memo for the President with the SNIE. We recommend against further dialogue with CIA on this subject at this time. Both the SNIE and the memo for the President agree that the Cambodian Government will survive at least through the end of the year. The difference lies mainly in tone, with the SNIE somewhat more cautious than the memo in assessing Hanoi's long and short-term intentions. That is normal for ONE. Moreover, since ONE concurred in the views expressed in the memo to the President, there would seem to be little profit from your viewpoint in asking them to plow this same ground again.

2. If nevertheless you wish to task CIA further on this subject, we would suggest a memo from you to Director Helms as attached at Tab A.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you defer recommending against further dialogue with CIA on this subject at this time.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_ (Signed) HK

Disapprove (Sign memo to Helms at Tab A) \_\_\_\_\_

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TL:nm:9/11/70

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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE HONORABLE RICHARD HELMS  
DIRECTOR  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

SUBJECT: The Situation in Cambodia

Several follow-on questions have arisen in the President's mind as a result of Special National Intelligence Estimate 57-70 'The Outlook for Cambodia' and the CIA memorandum of 27 August 1970 entitled 'The Current Military Situation in Cambodia and Short-Term Prospects.' The President has requested that a memorandum be prepared which addresses the question of what priority Hanoi now attaches to its operations in Cambodia compared to the priority it places on operations in South Vietnam. In other words, does Hanoi believe the Cambodian Government must be overturned before it can accomplish its aims in South Vietnam?

The question of Hanoi's attitude toward possible accommodation with Lon Nol should be examined also. What would Hanoi's terms be for such an accommodation or would it reject such an accommodation all together?

Would you please have the memorandum to me by 23 September 1970.

Henry A. Kissinger

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FL:am:9/11/70

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

21494

INFORMATION

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September 4, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: John Holdridge/Tom Latimer

SUBJECT: Our Comments on SNIE "The Outlook for Cambodia"

*How about adding  
CIA comment -  
especially to support  
movement of president  
with SNIE*

1. We are agreed that the estimate is unduly pessimistic over the chances for survival of the Lon Nol government. Mr. Holdridge notes that the SNIE speaks of the broad base of support for Sihanouk among the peasantry but fails to draw any conclusion from what it describes as the traditional apathy of the peasants toward events in the capital. Mr. Holdridge asserts that it is difficult to see how the apathetic peasants can add up to a broad base of support for Sihanouk. Mr. Holdridge also points out that the SNIE should have considered the many problems the communists would have if they were to attempt to take over all of Cambodia. One such problem would be the lack of Cambodian officials sympathetic to the communists, and the consequent need for large numbers of Vietnamese communists to be tied down in civil affairs missions. Another would be the losses the communists would have to incur if they should attack in force to take over all of Cambodia, losses they can ill afford. Mr. Holdridge also notes that ammunition shortages on the communist side now appear to be making an impact.

2. Mr. Latimer's view that the SNIE is too pessimistic stems in part from his disagreement with the estimate's basic judgment that one of Hanoi's prime intentions at present is the elimination of the Lon Nol government and its replacement by a regime which would be responsive to its wishes. Mr. Latimer believes that is a long-term communist goal but that for the near future, the enemy's goals are much less ambitious, namely reconstituting its supply system.

3. Both of us note that the SNIE does not come to grips with the important question of what priority Hanoi now places on its operations in Cambodia compared to the priority it places on operations in South Vietnam. Mr. Holdridge states that it is conceivable that Hanoi may ultimately decide to concentrate on seizing and holding just those strategic

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areas which are of value to it with respect to Vietnam and let Cambodians fight Cambodians elsewhere. Mr. Latimer expresses his belief that South Vietnam remains Hanoi's number one priority and that what they are now doing in Cambodia is primarily aimed at securing supply routes and base areas for further operations in South Vietnam.

4. Mr. Holdridge points out that the SNIE does not address some of the real questions which are central to Hanoi's problem and to ours in dealing with the situation such as: identifying the tensions and pressures existing in the Sihanouk-Peking-Hanoi relationship and how they could influence Hanoi's tactics in Cambodia, and possible North Vietnamese terms for an accommodation with Lon Nol or the likelihood that Hanoi would reject any such accommodation.

5. Mr. Latimer picks some different points which he feels the SNIE did not adequately address or did not address at all. For example, he did not find persuasive evidence to back the SNIE's judgment that the mood in Phnom Penh could turn to despair once the Cambodians realize they may be in for a long, hard war. He also believes the SNIE failed to back up its assumption that Hanoi may see an opportunity in Cambodia to tie down South Vietnamese  25X1 without excessive cost or risk to the communists. Mr. Latimer also notes that the SNIE failed to address the question of how large a Cambodian army is needed to handle the hit-and-run tactics of the communist force it faces. He also believes the paper gives too little credit to the value of U. S. air strikes and material assistance to the Cambodians.

6. As a final point, we note that both the CIA and the JCS/CINCPAC memos done per the President's request the last week in August state their belief that the present communist intention is to wage a protracted war against the Cambodian government and that it is unlikely the communists will attempt a quick strike aimed at toppling Lon Nol. That would imply that the chances are pretty good that Lon Nol will be able to survive through the end of the year, which was the original question ONE was asked to address.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION

August 21, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John H. Holdridge *JHO*

SUBJECT: Special National Intelligence Estimate 57-70:  
The Outlook for Cambodia

*How Dr Holdridge's  
comments compare  
with Lattimore's  
comments earlier*

At Tab A is a summary of Special National Intelligence Estimate 57-70:  
The Outlook for Cambodia. I understand that you have received your  
own copy of this SNIE, but thought that the summary might be of use  
to you.

Our comment concerning the SNIE is that while it is a well written  
paper which touches on most of the major factors at work in  
Cambodia on both sides, it is unnecessarily pessimistic.

For example, it speaks of the broad base of support for Sihanouk's  
leadership provided by the peasantry on the basis of great respect for  
royalty and affection for Sihanouk, but fails to draw any conclusion from  
what it describes in the next sentence as "traditional apathy of the  
peasants toward events in the capital." Those of us who have seen  
Cambodian peasants can assure you that they are apathetic, illiterate, and  
passive. They are simply there, and it is hard to see how they really  
add up to a broad base of support for Sihanouk.

There is another factor to consider -- the problems the NVA/VC would  
have if they were to attempt to take over all of Cambodia. The adminis-  
tration perforce would have to be Vietnamese, since most of the  
Cambodian officials have either fled or withheld their cooperation. This,  
then, would tie down large numbers of NVA/VC in civil affairs missions.  
Moreover if the NVA/VC should attack in force to take all of Cambodia,  
they will encounter resistance and suffer losses which they can ill afford.

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Another factor appears to be making itself felt -- ammunition shortages on the NVA/VC side. You will recall that our estimates were quite high on the percentage of total enemy ammunition stocks which we captured. This may be borne out in the fact that the enemy has not captured one major city which he has attacked recently. In the battle at Prek Temeak, just across the Mekong from Phnom Penh, the FANK noted that in the three successive enemy assaults launched each successive wave was of less intensity than the preceding one. FANK attributed this to lack of ammunition.

On the North Vietnamese side, the paper represents an adequate delineation of Hanoi's probable attitudes, as far as it goes, but it does not pose or begin to answer some of the real questions which are central to Hanoi's problem and to ours in dealing with the situation. For example, it does not address the following issues:

- What are the tensions and pressures existing in the Sihanouk-Peking-Hanoi relationship, and how could they influence Hanoi's tactics in Cambodia?
- What would Hanoi's terms be for an accommodation with Lon Nol, or would it reject any such accommodation?
- Is Hanoi now committed to a "Cambodia First" or still a "Vietnam First" policy, or to either?

It is conceivable that Hanoi may ultimately decide to concentrate on seizing and holding just those strategic areas which are of value to it with respect to Vietnam, and "let Cambodians fight Cambodians" elsewhere. This would entail building up pro-Sihanouk Cambodian forces, but might be less expensive than trying to take over the whole country.

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## THE OUTLOOK FOR CAMBODIA

### I. The Situation of the Lon Nol Government

Hanoi has long planned its hegemony over Phnom Penh. This could take the form of direct Vietnamese occupation, installation of a puppet-Khmer-Rouge regime comparable to the Pathet Lao, or acceptance of an ostensibly non-Communist or coalition group in to Phnom Penh which would be fully responsive to Hanoi's wishes.

At present, Hanoi controls all the northeast provinces, and some of the northern provinces of Cambodia. NVA/VC troops move at will throughout the rural areas of the country. The economy is at a standstill and Phnom Penh's rule is not felt outside the principal urban centers, in a country composed 85 percent of peasants. Hanoi has been able to accomplish this with less than 10,000 active combat troops.

Though Cambodian Army morale is reportedly still generally high, it is manifestly incapable of meeting and defeating Communist forces on a unit for unit basis. No terminal dates are suggested for the training period which would be required to try and bring the Cambodians up to the level of the Communist forces.

With the exception of South Vietnamese  25X1 operating in Cambodia in contiguous areas to secure their own borders, no other countries are likely to send combat forces to Cambodia. With the exception of the U. S. no country is likely to provide more than small amounts of economic or material assistance. Whatever military defense Cambodia puts up remains dependent on U. S. air support.

Whether Hanoi decides to extend its hegemony over Phnom Penh swiftly or more slowly will probably not be discernible until the end of the rainy season in October or November. If Hanoi chooses to invest its resources elsewhere this autumn, Lon Nol's government might survive into 1971. However, the Phnom Penh leadership has made it clear that it is not planning for a long war against the North Vietnamese such as has taken place in South Vietnam.

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Both Lon Nol and Sirik Matak reportedly are interested in examining compromise settlements for the conflict rather than subject their country to the kind of destructive military activity which has taken place in South Vietnam and Laos. While such a compromise would probably require the sacrifice of Sihanouk by Hanoi, this possibility should not be excluded since Sihanouk has chosen to throw in his lot with the Chinese whom the North Vietnamese have disappointed more than once in the past international negotiations.

## II. Hanoi's View

The paper also discusses Hanoi's attitude and probable courses of action. With regard to attitude, it makes the following points:

- Hanoi recognizes that the new situation in Cambodia confronts it with many problems, including the maintenance of supply and infiltration trails to South Vietnam. The latter can be done, if with effort.
- But Hanoi also sees opportunities to take over Cambodia more quickly than it had planned earlier, and with the support of such assets as Sihanouk. It lacks a number of things for conducting successful operations, such as a logistical system, an established infrastructure, and a claim to legitimacy for its people (all of which it had in South Vietnam). But it can fight without those.
- Hanoi also hopes that U. S. and South Vietnamese forces will become more extended because of Cambodia.
- Thus Hanoi is still committed to the struggle, and will not be rendered incapable of continuing that struggle by material or manpower shortages. It still thinks that it can go on longer than we can.

With respect to Hanoi's probable goals, the paper states that these are difficult to define but it suggests the following:

- To maintain the supply and infiltration routes into South Vietnam.
- To eliminate the Lon Nol Government. The paper gives the advantages and disadvantages, from Hanoi's view, of a slow or fast campaign against Lon Nol.

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The paper concludes that Hanoi will continue to maintain military pressure at a level which will sustain a long campaign, but that it could try to knock out Lon Nol at any time.

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