V. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF U.S. AIR OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA

When we left Washington in late-March the immediate objective of U.S. policy in Cambodia appeared to be the conclusion of a cease-fire between the Phnom Penh government and the forces opposing it. That objective had been stated, in the form of an expectation, by Dr. Kissinger at his January 24 press conference and restated, in the form of a unilateral declaration, by Marshal Lon Nol on January 29.

By the time we arrived in Phnom Penh in early April, however, the prospects for an early cease-fire were non-existent. The level of fighting had increased, not diminished, since late January. Most observers on the scene considered the political deterioration within the Cambodian Government to be as serious as the more obvious deterioration in the government's military position. Indeed, we found that the immediate concern of U.S. officials was simply to find a way to insure the government's survival and it was to achieve that immediate objective that the United States had greatly increased U.S. air operations in support of Cambodian Government forces engaged by that time in fighting a predominately Cambodian adversary.

In the political sphere, it was accepted as a fact by all informed observers that the United States had, through General Alexander Haig, who visited Phnom Penh while we were there, indicated to Lon Nol that U.S. economic and military support, including air support, would not be continued unless he brought certain opposition political leaders into his government and put an end to the activities of his brother, General Lon Non, so that a more "representative" government could be formed which would be better able to maintain a credible Cambodian military and negotiating posture.

By late April, when we left Southeast Asia, it was far from clear that the political and military intervention of the United States would have a decisive effect on the situation in Cambodia. It was clear, however, that the United States had become far more deeply and directly involved than ever before in the conduct of the war in Cambodia, as well as in Cambodia's internal political affairs. It was the unanimous opinion of the American military and civilian officials in Southeast Asia with whom we met, and of the Cambodians to whom we talked, that only U.S. air support had enabled the Cambodian Government's forces to survive and would permit them to continue fighting. And most observers assumed that if Lon Nol did succeed in forming a new government, as we had in effect demanded he would then be entitled to expect continued U.S. support and that support would be as essential for the survival of the new government as it had been for that of the former government.

We found widespread doubt on the part of experienced observers in Phnom Penh that even continued American air support and a reorganization of the Lon Nol government to include opposition leaders would arrest the government's decline. It was our impression that most Cambodians felt that it was now beyond the government's ability to do more than get out of the war and that, indeed, they had no other choice. There was, however, no indication that the Khmer insurgents (as they are now called in official U.S. terminology) and their North Vietnamese supporters were interested in a cease-fire. In fact, it was not even clear, to either American or Cambodian officials, with which individuals on the other side a cease-fire could be discussed or on what conditions the insurgents would insist.

It seems to us to be a fair assumption that the Khmer insurgents will continue to exert military pressure on the Lon Nol government, at least through the remainder of the dry season. It also seems to be a fair assumption that if the Khmer insurgents eventually do agree to a cease-fire they will insist on a role in the government, a cessation of U.S. air operations and either tacit or formal acquiescence to continued North Vietnamese transit of Cambodia in support of their forces in South Vietnam. From the point of view of the Khmer insurgents and the North Vietnamese a settlement on these terms would appear to be preferable to an outright takeover of the Cambodian Government which might not result in an end to U.S. bombing.

Thus, in the last analysis the key to a cease-fire may be Phnom Penh's willingness to accord the insurgents a role in the government. If the military situation should continue to deteriorate, however, Lon Nol and his colleagues may have no choice but to accept a cease-fire on whatever terms their opponents set.
There are some Cambodians and Americans who believe that the present impasse might suddenly be broken if Prince Sihanouk and the so far not clearly identified insurgent leadership were to begin, in concert, to negotiate with the leaders of the Phnom Penh government. Indeed, we found that Sihanouk’s return is no longer considered unthinkable in Phnom Penh and that the more dispirited the Cambodians become the more acceptable they find the idea of his return, particularly if it were to mean an end to the fighting.

The possibility that Cambodia might opt out of the war by agreeing to a cease-fire on terms that would not only leave the North Vietnamese in place but would also leave them free from U.S. air attack is, of course, a source of considerable apprehension in South Vietnam. South Vietnamese military and civilian officials with whom we met said that if this possibility were to materialize, South Vietnam would be faced with a serious if not untenable situation on its western flank. They also said that in view of the military situation within their own country, sending major South Vietnamese forces into Cambodia to support the Phnom Penh government would involve serious risks which they would be reluctant to take.

Another potential source of assistance to Cambodia would be a force of Thai “volunteers” or even regular Thai army units. It was our impression, however, that American officials doubted that the Thai would intervene in Cambodia without full financial, logistical and air support from the United States.

The options open to the United States in Cambodia are thus severely limited. Hence, if there is a road to peace in Cambodia, it could well lead through Hanoi, Peking and Moscow, for no matter how politically independent the Khmer insurgents are they could not continue a high enough level of military activity to threaten the existence of the Cambodian Government without assistance from others any more than government forces could continue to resist such a military effort without assistance from the United States. The Chinese and Soviets are not, of course, as directly involved in what has become essentially a Cambodian civil war as are we. And if they do not consider it in their interest to take an active political role in bringing about a settlement, the war will probably continue as long as we are willing to defend from the air a Cambodian army that does not seem to be able to defend itself on the ground.
Appendix II

OFFICIAL REPORTS ON THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEE CRISIS
(Prepared by the U.S. Agency for International Development)

I. REFUGEES IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC

By Jeffrey Millington, USAID Mission, Phnom Penh
(February 10, 1973)

FOREWORD

During the last year, there has been a number of reports written on refugees in the Khmer Republic. All were good reports, but all tended to concentrate on how many refugees there were, how much money was being spent on assistance, and how American aid might be used. Always the viewpoint of these reports was from above, looking down on the refugees. Government officials were met, trips were made to refugee camps, and refugee assistance was discussed in depth. But seldom does it appear that much time was actually spent talking with the refugees themselves. The purpose of this report is to look at the refugee problem from below, from the viewpoint of the refugees themselves. The hope is that by talking at length with refugees in all parts of the Khmer Republic, we can get a clear picture of who the refugee is, how he is living, and what problems he is facing. Only by clearly understanding the refugee himself and his problems, can we hope to organize effective assistance programs in the Khmer Republic.

SECTION A—THE REFUGEES

1. Who Are the Refugees in the Khmer Republic?—The great majority of the refugees in the Khmer Republic were farmers before the war. In Kompong Cham, some used to work in the rubber plantations; in Battambang, most of the Vietnamese refugees used to fish the waters of the Tonle Sap. But, for the most part, the bulk of the refugees used to plant rice. They were not, however, particularly sophisticated or skilled farmers. Since most attended only a few years of elementary school and few ever received any agricultural training, their method of farming was simple. In most provinces, fertilizer and insecticides were seldom used. (Svay Reang was an exception and fertilizer was used extensively because of the poor soil.) Tractors were seldom seen outside of Battambang and most farmers continued to rely on either water buffalo or oxen to prepare the fields. The new miracle rice varieties from the Philippines and Vietnam were also virtually unknown outside of a few Government-run agricultural stations. As a result, the average yield was low, only a little above one ton of paddy per hectare. Double cropping was seldom practiced because of the lack of water pumps and irrigation facilities. Surprisingly, however, the life of the average Khmer farmer before the war appears to have been rather pleasant. Most owned their own land and the average holding in Prey Veng, Kompong Cham, and Svay Reang averaged somewhere between one and two hectares, according to local officials. In Kampot, the average holding was a little smaller; in Battambang, a little larger. Besides rice, most farmers also raised vegetables and many raised chickens, pigs, and even cattle. Whatever problems they had, most Khmer farmers ate well before the war. Fish was plentiful. The average farm house was usually made from wood, in many cases had a tile roof, and also appears to have been quite comfortable. The constant and pervasive influence of the local Buddhist pagodas also added to the sense of well-being shared by many farmers. While talking about the war or their present condition, most refugees will repeat over and over again how nice it was on their farms before the war and how much they want to return. The United Nations Development Program in Phnom Penh estimates that only 60 percent of the refugees in the Khmer Republic will return to their homes.
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when peace returns. In my travels throughout the Republic, I found the percentage of refugees who wanted to go home considerably higher. In the provinces, I believe that 80 to 90 percent of the refugees would go home if peace returned; in Phnom Penh, probably only 60 to 65 percent would return. All is dependent, however, on the type of peace which is established. If the enemy continues to control large sections of the countryside after peace has returned, the number of refugees who would actually dare to return home would probably be rather small in comparison to the number who would return if the Government was in complete control.

2. Reason for Fleeing Their Homes.—At first, most of those who fled their homes did so in order to escape the war and the fighting. In some instances, they fled to avoid the allied air strikes; in others, they fled to avoid the South Vietnamese troops. (In Kampot, the South Vietnamese troops appear to have been particularly undisciplined. In Kep District, Kampot Province, the District Chief told me about how the ARVN soldiers looted at will, and even went so far as to steal and eat all of the animals in the local zoo.) In general, however, most of the present refugees fled from actual fighting and most fled into Government-controlled areas. At the present time, fighting continues to generate new refugees, especially around Kompong Thom. The recent fighting in Tram Khnar and Takeo has also created a large number of refugees, most of whom have settled in the southern delta area of Phnom Penh. In the other provinces, however, the fighting has stabilized to some extent and the number of refugees has remained fairly constant since August of 1972. During the last year, from areas where there is little fighting, a new type of refugee has emerged—a political refugee who is not fleeing from the fighting but instead is fleeing from the enemy. In some instances, many are fleeing from enemy-controlled areas because they cannot find enough food to live on. In Svay Rieng, the Province Chief is convinced that food supplies in the enemy-controlled areas will soon be exhausted and that refugees will continue to flee into the Government-controlled areas in ever increasing numbers. At the present time, an average of 300 to 400 refugees a month returns to Svay Rieng with the help of Vietnamese soldiers operating along the border. In Prey Veng, a large number of farmers recently tried to move out of the enemy-controlled area in order to do some dry season farming near Prey Veng, but were rounded up by the enemy and forced to go back into the enemy-controlled zone. In other instances, from Takeo, Kandal, and Kompong Cham, there is also a small but continuing flow of refugees who are fleeing from Communist oppression. (At this point, I am referring to the enemy as Communists because this is the term that the refugees used.) Some refugees I have talked to just tired of the complete control by the Communists of all facets of their daily life. Others were also weary of the taxes and conscription quotas imposed by the enemy. The most bitter, however, were those who had been concentrated by the enemy into remote areas for incarceration and indoctrination. Living conditions in these areas were grim and food was scarce. According to the Deputy Province Chief in Kandal Province, whenever the Government runs operations into the mountains, there is always a number of Khmer who flee from such concentration camps and follow the Government soldiers back.

3. Where Did They Flee to?—Originally, most Khmer refugees fled to the nearest district or provincial capital, where they were usually able to move in with relatives and be able to stay close to their land—just in case peace came and they could return. In Prey Veng, however, security was questionable and many refugees who originally fled to Prey Veng later moved on to either Neak Luong or on to Phnom Penh. In Kampot Province, work was difficult to find and a great many of the refugees who fled the fighting along the border also stayed in Kampot only a short time and then moved on to Kompong Som to work as storekeepers. (At times, Khmer refugees can be rather adventurous, and many have travelled long distances looking for work. When the General Director for War Victims and Refugees wanted to move some refugees up to Peulin to dig for precious stones, for example, they had no trouble filling their quota. It must be remembered, however, that most of the refugees want to stay near to their homes and would resist any attempt to move them to distant provinces.) As the war continued, however, security deteriorated, jobs became harder to find, and large numbers of refugees moved out of the provinces and into Phnom Penh. At the present time, refugees are still coming in and it is likely that over half of all the refugees in the Khmer Republic are now in Phnom Penh. (During December, 1972, there were over 236,000 registered refugees in Phnom Penh and only 205,000 in the provinces.)
4. Refugee Housing.—The majority of the refugees in the Khmer Republic live outside of refugee camps with relatives. The sense of family in Cambodia has always been strong, and even after nearly three years of war, refugees are almost always welcome to stay with relatives, no matter how crowded conditions might be. In areas with a large number of refugees such as Svay Rieng, Kompong Cham, and the southern delta area of Phnom Penh, it is common to have two, three, four, and even five families living in the same house. Even refugees who have built small thatched houses for themselves will invite relatives who have fled from the provinces in to live with them. Over-crowding is acute, and in many of the smaller houses containing refugees there is no other furniture besides wall-to-wall beds. In some cases, there are not even enough beds to go around and the children have to sleep on the floor. Surprisingly, even with everybody crowded together, most of the refugee families still work separately and continue to eat separately, even in the same house. With overcrowding as widespread as it is, it is not surprising that tempers run short and that arguments are more common than before. But what is surprising is the fact that the Cambodian family ties have held up as well as they have, and that there are almost no instances where a refugee family has been thrown out by their relatives. Those refugees who cannot move in with relatives for one reason or another usually build their own house along the road or on any vacant area that they can find. In Phnom Penh especially, some of the refugees are well off and have been able to build rather large and comfortable looking houses. Most refugee houses, however, in both Phnom Penh and the provinces, are small thatched affairs which are better suited to sheltering cattle than they are to sheltering people. In the rainy season, most of these houses will give little or no protection from the rain and some will even be inundated by the annual floods. Sanitation facilities usually are nearby fields, and water has to be carried in from the nearest well, if there is one. Many of the older refugee houses are also now showing signs of age and some are near collapse. Besides those refugees who live with relatives and those who have built their own houses, there are some who live in refugee camps. Estimated at only around 10,000 people, the camp dwellers are in some ways the most desperate of all the refugees. Most refugee families, no matter how poor, usually are intact, and the father and older sons can go out and find some sort of work. In the refugee camps, however, many of the families are without able-bodied men and, consequently, have no source of steady income. Malnutrition and intestinal problems are widespread. In general, however, living conditions in the camps are poor but bearable. Crowding is a problem, but most refugees live in individual houses. There is also usually enough space to move around, and some camps even have room enough to plant small vegetable gardens. And unlike the refugees outside, refugees in the camps usually get some type of Government assistance, such as food, clothes, or other relief items. Government services such as health and medical facilities are also usually available.

5. Work.—Since the great majority of the refugees in the Khmer Republic were farmers before the war, most have few skills and little training. For the most part, in both Phnom Penh and in the provinces, male refugees work as day laborers or as cycle-drivers. There are exceptions, however, and in Kompong Svay, many work as stevedores at the harbor. In Pailin, many dig for precious stones. In Kompong Cham, some still are able to harvest bamboo from the nearby forests. The refugee wives and small children usually sell things in the market, or work as domestics. In Kampot, they also work as field hands in both the rice fields and the salt beds. In general, there is very little outright unemployment; most refugees can find work if they look hard enough. What unemployment there is, is usually limited to families without able-bodied males in the camps or to provinces like Svay Rieng, which are completely isolated by the enemy. But, if there is no much unemployment, there is widespread underemployment. With so many refugees looking for work, the job market in most of the Khmer Republic is glutted. The average refugee, who before lived well on his one to two hectares of land, now finds himself making only 100 to 150 Riels a day. For some, the average daily wage drops as low as 00 to 70 Riels a day. The female refugees have an even harder time, and some spend the whole day in the market and make only 30 or 40 Riels. For many refugee families, the amount of money made each day is never enough to cover their daily expenses.

6. Refugee Morale and General Physical Condition.—In general, the morale of the refugees is not bad. Most have some sort of house that they can call
home and most are gainfully employed in some fashion. And if a man has a home and can make a living, he usually is not completely demoralized. The only real instances of complete demoralization I found were in the camps, chiefly in those families where there were no able-bodied men. While other refugee families gain strength from the hope that sooner or later they will go home, the refugee families with no husbands and no sons cannot even be sure that they will be able to return, if and when peace comes. The general health of the refugees is also surprisingly good, but undernourishment is widespread. The only specific medical problems I could find among the refugees were malaria in Kampot and Prey Veng Provinces, and tuberculosis and stomach disorders in Kompong Cham Province. In Phnom Penh, the World Health Organization also feels that the increase in the incidence of hemorrhagic fever can be directly correlated to the arrival of the refugees from infested areas.

7. Government Services.—The refugee is usually concerned about only two Government services—health and education. Compared to Vietnam, the Khmer health services have been very sensitive to the needs of the refugees. In almost every province, Government doctors spend some time visiting refugees in and around the provincial capital. In both Kompong Cham and Svay Rieng, the doctors try to visit refugee settlements at least once a week. In Phnom Penh, Government doctors regularly work in the camps, but are seldom ever able to visit refugees outside of the camps. In both Phnom Penh and the provinces, refugees are also able to use the Government clinics and hospitals, if they are seriously ill. The influx of refugees has put a severe strain on the Government’s health services, however, and every doctor I met complained of a lack of drugs. The Government’s educational system also is severely overloaded at the present time. Besides having to accommodate a tremendous number of new students, most provincial education services have the additional problem that many of their schools have been abandoned because of security or have been destroyed by the war. In many provinces, overcrowding is acute and some provinces have had to resort to scheduling three sessions a day. The supply of teachers seems to be adequate—it appears to be just a problem of not enough school rooms.

8. The Numbers.—The following statistics on refugees in the Khmer Republic were prepared by the GKR Directorate General for War Victims and Refugees. During my visits inside Phnom Penh and to the provinces, I have found that these figures are generally the most accurate figures available.

a. Phnom Penh, registered refugees:
   In the camps, 858 families, 3,702 people.
   Outside of the camps, 47,815 families, 286,060 people.

b. In the Provinces, registered refugees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kandal</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td>15,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cudong M. Chey</td>
<td>5,172</td>
<td>17,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vihean Suor</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>2,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompong Cham</td>
<td>5,557</td>
<td>29,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prey Veng</td>
<td>1,041</td>
<td>5,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svay Rieng</td>
<td>5,532</td>
<td>24,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampot</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>4,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeo</td>
<td>4,475</td>
<td>18,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prey Kabass</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>2,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tram Khnong</td>
<td>1,427</td>
<td>6,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koh Kong</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>1,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompong Speu</td>
<td>2,821</td>
<td>13,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompong Som</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>6,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battambang</td>
<td>3,605</td>
<td>16,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursat</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>8,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompong Caanhag</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>5,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompong Tralach</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangkum M. Chey</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siemreap</td>
<td>3,101</td>
<td>14,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompong Thom</td>
<td>2,904</td>
<td>9,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preah Vihean</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odar M. Chey</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total in the Provinces—44,252 families, 205,671 people.

c. There are also an estimated 200,000 refugees who have not yet registered.
There are so many refugees scattered throughout the whole of the Khmer Republic that it is difficult to isolate and evaluate the specific problems which are of the most immediate concern to the refugees. Probably the only way to get away from broad generalizations is to select a small number of "typical" refugee areas and concentrate on them. In the Khmer Republic, refugees tend to fall into three major categories: Those who live in the camps; those who live outside of the camps in the provinces; and those who live outside of the camps in Phnom Penh. To understand the problems of the refugees in these three basic categories, I visited and talked with refugees in three representative areas: The Chak Angre refugee camp in Phnom Penh; Svay Rieng Province; and the southern dike region of Phnom Penh. Below are my impressions of the most important problems facing the refugees in these three areas, and possible programs we might support to assist them.

1. The Chak Angre Refugee Camp—Phnom Penh.—Though a comparatively small camp with only 645 refugees, the Chak Angre camp is typical of the many camps scattered throughout the Khmer Republic. The physical condition of the camp itself is not good. The houses are small, old, and, in need of repair. On most, the roof is in various stages of disintegration and probably does little more than slow the rains down during the wet season. Drainage around the houses also appears to be inadequate and the whole camp will probably be flooded after a good rainstorm. The toilet facilities are in need of repair. Unlike most other camps, however, there is an infirmary at Chak Angre, but it too is in poor condition— the walls have holes in them, the paint is peeling, and the roof needs some work. The Government has constructed a two-room school which is holding up well. Classes are overcrowded, however, and more classrooms are needed. While the physical condition of the camp itself is bad, the condition of the resident refugees is, in some ways, worse. One of the reasons for the poor morale and health of the refugees in the Chak Angre camp is the lack of able bodied men. In some cases, the husband and older sons enlisted in the army are still serving in other parts of the country; in other cases, they were killed or captured by the enemy. Some just disappeared and were never heard from again. Consequently, many of the families at the camp are made up of women, children, and old men. According to the statistics compiled by the Directorate General for Refugees and War Victims, women outnumber the men in the Chak Angre camp by 163 to 116. Since there are 142 families in the camp, there are at least 26 families (19 percent) with no men whatsoever. And from what I have seen, many of the men in the camp are old, infirm, and incapable of working. Consequently, most of the families without men are unable to make enough money to do anything more than survive from day to day. In one such instance, I talked to one family of six which was struggling along on the 50 Riels a day which one of the daughters made as a servant. The diet of many of the refugees in the camp is poor, and malnutrition and stomach disorders appear to be widespread, especially among the children. As is to be expected, morale is bad.

Since the problems faced by the refugees in Chak Angre are similar to the problems faced by other refugees in other camps, the following are both specific proposals for the Chak Angre camp and general proposals for other camps in the Khmer Republic.

a. Repair. The Chak Angre camp is one of the older camps in the country and the physical plant is badly in need of repair. With the rainy season approaching, the first thing that needs to be done is to replace the present inadequate thatched roofs with a new canvas covering. New toilets should be built. The holes in the infirmary walls also need to be repaired and the whole place painted. New furniture should be purchased to replace the junk they have in there now. The two schoolrooms are holding up well and no work is needed on them. However, since teachers are available, one or two new classrooms should be built to relieve overcrowding and to allow the older students to move onto the next higher grades. The Directorate General for Refugees and War Victims estimates that the above repair would cost Riels 4 billion. Throughout the country, other camps are in need of similar, minor repairs. In Svay Rieng, the Bak Ronas camp needs a few new wells. In Kompong Cham, the walls on one of the refugee barracks are near collapse and should be repaired. Minor repairs and simple construction projects in the refugee camps are inexpensive, relatively easy, and can do a lot to make life more bearable.
in the camps. (What should be avoided, however, is the construction of new camps or the expansion of the present ones. Projects like these tend to create large numbers of new camp residents while doing little to improve the condition of those already in the camps.)

b. **Training and Home Industry.** Since most of the adults in the camps are untrained with little education and few skills, it is difficult for them to make a living. Besides the almost insurmountable problem of finding a job, many refugee mothers have the added handicap of being unable to leave their children unattended when they go to work. In Chak Angre, since there is little land available for gardening or poultry raising, one thing which might be done to ease the employment situation would be to organize a training program in home industry. There are many people in the camps who spend the day sitting around doing nothing, and who would be receptive to any type of training which would help earn some extra money at home. In the provinces, the situation is somewhat different since the provincial camps usually have a little more room. Even in the Bok Roneas camp in Svay Rieng, one of the largest and most overcrowded of the camps in the Khmer Republic, refugees have planted literally hundreds of small vegetable gardens in between the houses on any bit of unused land they can find. In the refugee camp just outside of Kep in Kampot Province, the refugees have an almost unlimited amount of land which could be used for vegetable and small livestock raising projects. With land available, it might be more effective to concentrate on organizing small agricultural projects than to organize home industry programs. But, whether we support home industry training courses or concentrate on small agricultural projects, something should be done to increase the income of the refugees in the camps.

c. **Feeding and Nutritional Improvement Programs.** After all is said and done about the refugees, we still run into the unavoidable problem that many of the refugees in the Chak Angre camp especially the children, are badly undernourished. Though the training program mentioned above might help to relieve this problem to some degree, something should be done now to insure that the refugees in Chak Angre get enough to eat. Probably the only thing which can be done is to organize a limited feeding and nutritional improvement program for those desperately in need of additional food. In the provinces, undernourishment is less of a problem in the camps than it is in Phnom Penh, but there is still the need for some food distribution in such provinces as Svay Rieng, Takeo, and Kompong Thom. If food distribution programs are organized, they must be limited and closely controlled to avoid promoting refugee dependency on the Government.

2. **Svay Rieng Province.**—One of the more frequently visited provinces before the war, Svay Rieng has been encircled and cut off by the enemy since April of 1972. Travel to and from Svay Rieng can now be accomplished only by air. The Province Chief, Colonel Nup Paramun, has followed the refugee problem closely and he estimates that in Svay Rieng there are now 24,000 registered refugees and an additional 16,000 who are not in need of assistance and who have never bothered to register. Though Kompong Cham has a larger total number of refugees, [Svay Rieng has by far the highest concentration of refugees of all the provinces in the Khmer Republic. The town is completely saturated with refugees and there is just no room for any more. The camps are overcrowded and the original residents have taken in as many refugees as they can. Land on which to build small thatched huts is also becoming increasingly difficult to find. Work is also difficult to find and steady jobs are almost nonexistent. Work is now so scarce in Svay Rieng that many male refugees spend day after day in fields which have already been harvested, looking for leftover rice. Even more depressing, however, is the fact that new refugees continue to flow in. On an average, 300 to 500 new refugees a month follow Vietnamese military operations back to Svay Rieng. Most arrive with no money, no belongings, and only the rags on their backs. For many, life has been reduced to a mere struggle for survival.

a. **Reception of New Refugees.** Since most of the 300 to 500 new refugees who arrive in Svay Rieng each month are able to bring with them nothing more than the clothes on their backs, it is imperative that they receive some governmental assistance when they arrive. First, they must receive enough food (rice, dried fish, and fish sauce) to get them through the first two weeks. Second, the new refugee should receive a mosquito net, a blanket, a mat on which to sleep, and some material to make new clothes. Third, they should
receive a medical examination and medicine from the Government doctors, both to protect the refugee and to keep communicable diseases from being brought into Svay Rieng. Finally, if possible, the new refugees should be allowed to stay at a Government Reception Center a few days while they look for a place to stay. (In Svay Rieng, where 300 to 500 refugees arrive at one time, it might not be possible to establish a reception center with temporary quarters for new refugees. In other provinces, however, where the flow of new refugees is much smaller such a center might be easily organized.)

b. Work Projects. The Svay Rieng Province Chief is terribly concerned about refugee unemployment. He feels, quite correctly, that unemployment destroys a man's pride and sense of independence. (The Deputy Province Chief in Kandal is also deeply concerned about the same problem.) To decrease unemployment among the refugees, the Province Chief in Svay Rieng has organized a number of work projects which employ large numbers of refugees. At the present time, he has a hundred or so working on a project to expand the Svay Rieng airport. He would like to do more. (In Kandal, the Deputy Province Chief also would like to put a number of refugees to work cleaning up and repainting the city of Takhmau, if he only had the money to pay them.) Work projects would appear to be one of the best ways of helping refugees in Svay Rieng because they support the refugees while not making them dependent on the Government dole. Also, with so much war-caused damage around, work projects can also represent a start toward the reconstruction of the country. For example, because of the recent heavy influx of refugees and because of war-related damage, the schools in Svay Rieng are terribly overcrowded. One possible work project would be to build a number of new schoolrooms. The teachers are there already—all is needed now are the new classrooms. (In Kampot Province, the schools are equally crowded and the Deputy Province Chief estimates that he needs to construct 30 more classrooms this year. In Kompong Cham, the estimated minimum requirement is for 40 more classrooms.)

c. Preparation for Resettlement. When peace comes, most of the refugees will hit the road and return home within a few days. Living conditions are so bad and jobs are so scarce in Svay Rieng that few refugees would stay around for any longer than the few days necessary to pack up their belongings and find some way of getting home. Even though peace is not at all certain, now is the time to start preparing for the refugees' return to their homes. For if we wait until peace comes, most of the refugees are going to be on the road heading home before we can even begin to react. Now, while there is still time, we must begin to ascertain exactly what the refugee will need when he returns to his old home in order to plant a crop of rice and survive until it is harvested. If initial impressions are correct, the refugee returning home will probably need food, farm tools, seeds, and some cash in order to get started again. Once the needs are clarified, we must help to set up the system which will supply the refugee what he needs, when he actually needs it. Also, while the refugee is waiting for peace, it would be a good time to start talking to him about development and about ways to make his farm more productive. Besides helping to further prepare the refugee for the return home, training about development would also help to keep his mind off his problems and to keep his morale up.

3. Phnom Penh—The Southern Dike. The refugees living near the southern edge of Phnom Penh are similar in many ways to the out-of-camp refugees in Svay Rieng or, for that matter, in any other province with a high concentration of refugees. Most were farmers before the war forced them from their homes in Takeo, Kandal, and Kampot Provinces. Being unskilled, most of the male refugees now work in Phnom Penh as cyclo-drivers, laborers, or street vendors. The daily average wage in Phnom Penh is a little higher than in the provinces, but so is the price of food. The refugee in the southern dike region usually makes from 100 to 200 Riel a day. With this money, if he has a family of five, he can buy enough rice, vegetables, and "prohoc" (fish paste) to get through the day. He usually, is not able to buy meat or any special food for the young. New Clothes, repairs on the house, or a family trip somewhere are usually out of the question. In Svay Rieng, most of the refugees have to grapple with traditional refugee problems, such as lack of housing, work, and food. In Phnom Penh, however, most refugees have some sort of house, work regularly, and usually have enough food to get by. The problems facing the refugees in Phnom Penh are more the problems of the poor. They have money...
but not enough. They work, but are unskilled and underemployed. They live in a house, but usually it is too-small, too crowded, and has no electricity, water, or toilet facilities. Besides facing problems slightly different from those faced by the refugees in Svay Rieng, the refugees in Phnom Penh are even more dissimilar because many of them will not return home if peace comes. In the provinces, probably 80 to 90 percent of the refugees will return to their farms once peace returns. In Phnom Penh, probably only 60 to 65 percent will return.

(There are several reasons for the difference in the percentage of refugees returning home. Many of the refugees in Phnom Penh have travelled farther from their homes and feel cut off from their past. Jobs are also easier to find in Phnom Penh than in the provinces. Last, but not necessarily least, there are many more ways to have a good time in Phnom Penh than in the provinces.) In the provinces, the shanty towns erected by the refugees present no permanent urban problem since they can be demolished by the city officials once peace comes and the refugees have returned home. In Phnom Penh, however, many refugees are not planning on returning home and many of the refugee areas are already taking on the appearance of permanent slums. With each day, these slums grow larger, and Phnom Penh becomes a more unpleasant town to live in.

a. Training. In the provinces, job training is not terribly important since most of the refugees already know how to farm and will return to their farms when security improves in the countryside. In Phnom Penh, however, many of these refugee farmers will not return to their homes, but instead will stay on where they are. Since they have no skills, most of them will never be able to find a job doing anything but peddling a cycle around town or working as a day laborer. To assist them while at the same time avoiding the creation of a permanent pool of unemployed and underemployed in Phnom Penh, it is necessary to set up training programs to retrain these refugees for more productive jobs.

b. Urban Planning. With every passing day, new refugees flow in Phnom Penh and the refugee slum areas grow a little bit larger. The Government has no control over the expansion of these slums and an area which was one day a rice paddy will the next day be a teeming shanty town. Public utilities are unavailable in these areas and roads are still in the planning stages. Something will have to be done to control the spread of these slums and to prepare for the organized resettlement of refugees throughout the city. If nothing is done, however, and the urban sprawl continues uncontrolled, Phnom Penh will end up like Saigon—a mass of slums and shanty towns.

II. U.S. ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES AND CIVILIAN WAR VICTIMS IN CAMBODIA

By Donald Goodwin and D. Merrill, (USAID/Washington)  
(September 2, 1972)
Summary of Findings and Recommendations

1. There has been an influx of refugees into Phnom Penh since the NVA offensive beginning this spring. Net numbers of displaced persons in Phnom Penh are also believed to have increased considerably, even though the data are subject to question.

2. The requirements of the refugees for assistance, although difficult to quantify, are not being fully met by help currently being provided by the Government of the Khmer Republic (GKR) and other donors. There is room for the U.S.G. to augment such help without a serious risk of displacing it. U.S.G. assistance should be a response to the GKR’s August 10, 1972 formal appeal to the U.S. and other friendly countries for assistance to refugees and war victims.

3. Needs of the refugees are for short-term medical attention, food, and shelter, as well as possible cash allowances. However, there is a growing realization on the part of refugees and squatters that they will not be able to return to their villages soon. In the mid-term, they require an opportunity for temporary resettlement, primarily in undeveloped land within the greater Phnom Penh perimeter but also in the environs of some provincial towns, which will enable them to resume a more productive existence pending conditions permitting their return to their native provinces and villages.

4. We have examined various alternatives and approaches to meeting these needs, from channeling counterpart into an essentially GKR effort, on the one hand, to bring in an outside agency to conduct direct help, on the other. The varying capacities of the several uncoordinated GKR agencies dealing with the problem are such that we do not believe it would be wise to simply allocate counterpart without adequate supervision and technical assistance. On the other hand, we want to avoid bringing in an outside voluntary agency unfamiliar with Cambodia which would represent another element in an already complex constellation.

5. We have concluded that the best approach would be to make an institutional grant to the United Nations Development Program in Cambodia for use in developing mid-term relief and resettlement projects, through the Ministry of Plan, with the concerned Government of the Khmer Republic agencies. UNDP has been in country since 1965 and has nearly 40 technicians in country. Its work here on the development of a plan for greater Phnom Penh and on resettlement programs connected with Prek Thnoat make it the logical choice for assisting in the development of smaller and more rapid resettlement activities within the context of its overall program.

6. In addition to funding projects with Khmer agencies, the UNDP would use part of the grant to augment the existing $400,000 per annum UNICEF program, and possibly the WHO program, with commodities for the relief and resettlement of displaced persons. Another part of the grant would be used for modest augmentation of UNDP technical staff to focus on relief and resettlement. We believe that the initial grant probably cannot exceed about $500,000 without straining the absorptive capacity of the UNDP and the Khmer ministries. However, the grant or portions of it could be replenished as operating experience is gained.

7. Our alternate recommendation if the UNDP is not available would be to bring in an international voluntary agency to work with the Government of the Khmer Republic. However, we and the Embassy greatly prefer the UNDP approach, and we are hopeful that the UNDP will accept this role.

8. In addition to the UNDP grant, we believe that, in order to address the most immediate kinds of short-term needs in the camps and centers, and for those coming in from the provinces, a small grant (probably NTE $500,000) should be made to the International Committee of the Red Cross for work through the Khmer Red Cross in Cambodia. We recommend that this be done in advance of the passage of the FY 1973 authorization and appropriations acts.

9. We also believe that it will be necessary to assign one refugee officer to ECOS to monitor the implementation of the grants and to keep Washington informed on refugee matters. This can be accommodated within presently authorized A.I.D. strength.

10. The American Embassy in Phnom Penh fully supports the above recommendations.
II. NUMBERS OF REFUGEES

As previous reports have indicated, there are no reliable statistics on numbers of refugees and war victims. Some are continually moving, and many do not register or report their movements to the authorities. Nevertheless, there are several ways of arriving at an order of magnitude of the problem.

"Refugees and war victims" are defined in the February 2, 1972 GAO Report (page 1) as "those Cambodians who have fled their homes in Communist-controlled territory or who have been displaced or are war victims as a result of combat activity in that country".

If one accepts this definition, it is possible to use the approach of the April UNDP Report to gain an estimate of refugees in Phnom Penh. The population of Phnom Penh was about 800,000 before the war. The 250,000 Vietnamese nationals left during 1970. The population as of April 1972 is estimated conservatively at 1.1 million to 1.2 million, although other estimates have ranged as high as 1.5 to 2.0 million. Therefore, not allowing for normal urbanization, but accepting a 1.1 to 1.2 million population, a conservative estimate would be that 550,000 to 650,000 people had come to Phnom Penh because of the war by April of 1972.

We were told that there has been a "large" influx of new refugees into Phnom Penh resulting from the acceleration of combat activities in April of this year. We were unable to determine the size of this increase.

Figures provided by the Director-General of War Victims show that his Directorate had registered 120,613 refugees in Phnom Penh as of April 1972, and registered 149,029 additional refugees in Phnom Penh between April 30 and August 20. However, much of the apparent increase was due to a registration program conducted by the Directorate since April (when it was transferred from the Ministry of Labor and Social Action to the Ministry of Interior and elevated from a Committee to a Directorate). Therefore, it is impossible to discern the extent to which the April-August increase represents an influx of refugees rather than a registration campaign. Phnom Penh refugees registered with the Directorate as of August 20 total 269,642, but names are not taken off the lists if refugees return to the provinces. On the other hand, it would be safe to assume that there are at least as many unregistered refugees as registered ones. In addition, there are 2,137 registered refugees living in five official camps in Phnom Penh, and 228,006 refugees listed by the Directorate as being registered with provincial authorities.

Figure 1: Numbers of Refugees

(Source: Directorate of Refugees and War Victims.)

| 1. In camps in Phnom Penh | 2,187 |
| 2. Registered, out of camps, in Phnom Penh | 269,642 |
| 3. Refugees, registered, in provinces | 228,006 |
| Total registered | 499,875 |
| Estimate of unregistered refugees in Phnom Penh | 200,000 |
| Estimate of refugees in Cambodia as of August 20, 1972 | 699,875 |

1 For detail, see appendix.
2 Most registered refugees are believed to be living with relatives and friends rather than being squatters.
3 Most of the squatters are believed to be included in this figure.

Obviously, these statistics are not fully adequate. We recommend that high priority be given to filling the vacant position of demography and statistics expert on the UNDP staff, as part of the program recommended in this report. If the position cannot be filled soon, short-term assistance for the UNDP should be obtained either from UNDP or AID staff.

It was very difficult to get any statistics on civilian war casualties. We visited the two largest civilian hospitals, Prae Khet Mealea and the Soviet Friendship Hospital. We talked to several wounded military personnel who

* The GAO Report was prepared for the Subcommittee and has been published in War Victims in Indochina. Reports prepared by the General Accounting Office, May 3, 1972, pp. 83-114.
said they had been caught in fire fights. Most of the civilian casualties we talked to were wounded as a result of non-military causes. The Director of the Soviet Friendship Hospital, in response to our question, said he currently had seven civilian patients wounded as a result of military action, although previously he had had more.

III. CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES

General Observations and Impressions

There is considerable variation in the conditions of the refugees. As a gross generalization, one can say that those who have found shelter with relatives and friends appear to have the smallest decline in their living conditions, which are nearly indistinguishable from the general population. However, since there appear to be few Phnom Penh residents who are not sheltering relatives, and friends from the provinces, the conditions of the general population have also deteriorated since the war, in terms of available living space and government services per person.

Generally, those who cannot find shelter with relatives and friends simply build houses in vacant land around greater Phnom Penh. Such houses may range from the most rudimentary thatched roof shack to ones costing 30,000 to 40,000 Riel (primarily for lumber).

Those in the official camps and centers are generally living in poorer conditions than others of the other two groups. However, some of the camps are more adequate than others and the total number in camps is quite small relative to the generally displaced population.

Probably one of the most disconcerting aspects of the situation is not only the present conditions of the refugees but their growing realization that they will not be able to return to their villages soon. Some have been displaced for more than two years. People already reestablished still worry about further displacement and a most uncertain future.

Refugees and war victims in general face the same conditions as do many others who are poor, who have inadequate housing and not enough work. The others too face rising costs and lack of availability of necessities.

The most serious problems—aside from the war itself—are the lack of money and the decrease in rice stocks. Government budgets already strained need to be expanded to cover resettlement costs, medical services, and temporary allowances. Individuals need money to buy rice, housing materials, and clothing. Underemployment weighs heavily because of inability to earn money regularly. Fortunately, no major epidemics have yet occurred because of the existing but very limited sanitation and medical services.

Housing

The team travelled extensively throughout Phnom Penh and its environs, observed hundreds—probably thousands—of structures and shelters and talked with a random sampling of occupants. A large number of houses were constructed of palm fronds (thatch), boards and matting. Other structures were built of wood, most of them with matting but many with metal roofing. Some structures were old and weather-beaten while others were obviously built within the past two years.

Houses are on stilts in or over water, along dikes, in fields, around army camps. The government has undertaken to construct barrack-type housing for some of the soldiers but at present most of them appear to be on their own.

The worst housing conditions observed are the older refugee camps and the box cars which house people whose homes were rocketed in March 1972. We were not, of course, able to evaluate how even this housing compared with the upcountry homes the refugees had left. Recent evacuees from Svay Rieng have been housed in an uncompleted international hotel on the waterfront. They were sleeping on concrete floors but at least were covered from the rain and sun and had plenty of air and room. The team was told that this was only a temporary arrangement, and the occupants would be moved.

The best housing for those refugees taking care of themselves were homes of wood costing 20,000 to 40,000 riel. The occupants we talked to were refugees who joined the army after coming to Phnom Penh from various places and apparently were unable to find other employment. Most of these and other squatter houses are on land to which the occupants have no title nor claim.
Many have been informed that they will have to move and are alarmed at the prospect and the loss.

Health

Health conditions were also varied. The worst conditions observed were in refugee camps where we could see children with sores, a few cases of fever, and respiratory diseases. The Acting Director of the International Committee of the Red Cross said the most troublesome problem was intestinal diseases. He cited the need for mosquito netting and health assistants. According to the Acting WHO representative, even though the size of the refugee and war victims problem had increased since the UNDP report in April, the health conditions in Phnom Penh had improved somewhat. He referred to better garbage collection, improved availability of pharmaceuticals, and an expanded immunization program by the Ministry of Health.

Potable water was being distributed periodically by trucks to areas occupied by squatters and army dependents. Refugee camps had access to city water supply. The Minister of Health said that the Ministry had mobile health teams visit squatter areas throughout the city periodically. These teams provided advice on public health practices as well as performing minimal health services.

The Minister indicated that through the emphasis on public health and sanitation practices major epidemics had been avoided despite the large increase of refugees and war victims in recent months. He pointed out that hospitals were crowded, some medicines were in short supply because of funding shortages and the length of time required to obtain them from abroad, and there was a growing need for spare parts for hospital equipment. On the positive side some 300 types of pharmaceuticals are now made in Phnom Penh.

Food

At the time of our visit a most serious problem was the shortage of rice and the increase in its cost. The price of 100 kg was approaching the monthly salary of a soldier. It is doubtful that many refugees had enough work for even a 3000 Riel/month income. Government stocks through which some people have been purchasing at 147 riel for 16 kg are drying up. Wherever we asked individuals what was the most critical need the answer invariably was connected with the price and availability of rice. (Note: the question of rice availability was also of high priority in the American Embassy during the time of our visit. The ramifications of rice policy go beyond our study although the implications for displaced persons are evident.)

Clothing

The most tattered clothing we saw was in the refugee camps though it is important to stress that the situation can be more readily observed in camps than in the scattered sites and buildings housing displaced persons. Some donations of clothing had been received and distributed by the Director General of War Victims, and the Khmer Red Cross and other charity organizations. Clothing does not appear to be a critical need, except perhaps during the short “winter” season.

As with numbers of refugees, the quantification of needs of refugees is hazardous. The amounts of food, shelter, medicines, etc. which are claimed to be needed are at best based upon the numbers of people who have registered, and has the faults inherent in that figure. The problem of lack of reliable data is probably not as great for meeting emergency and temporary needs as it is and will be for meeting long term needs including eventual resettlement.

IV. CURRENT PROGRAMS OF GKR AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND OTHER CAPABILITIES

We visited most of the Ministries and agencies which were involved with refugees and war victims. Through discussions on programs, budgets, staffing and relationships with other organizations we attempted to draw some conclusions on their ability and capacity to perform at the present level and at a higher level if more resources were available. The Ministries of Public Works and Health are large and appear to be well-organized and well led. With the exception of the Dept. of Community Development, the other government agencies which are involved with refugees, war victims and the poor are small, inadequately staffed and with very small budgets; in most instances their
leadership appeared to be capable but their capacity limited. The total amount of small, usually quite independent actions and programs, while not extensive enough to solve the many problems, altogether are well intentioned and make a positive contribution toward meeting the problem. We hoped to see better planning and coordination of effort but we found no such point in the government. Our conclusion is that outside donors can play a useful role in bringing about such coordination. In any event, the varying capacities of the several ministries concerned with aspects of the problem are such that we believe that funds should not be made available without some mechanism for supervision and technical assistance.

1. Directorate for War Victims. The Commissioner for War Victims, formerly under the Ministry of Social Action, Labor and Employment, has been downgraded and transferred to the Ministry of Interior. It has a budget of about 11 million riels and a staff of 150 of which only two are professionals. This agency has the responsibility to register refugees, to make payments and issue commodities for emergency relief, to make payments to the families of civilian war casualties, and to record claims for war damage losses. It also receives donations for the relief of war victims. The organization receives reports from provincial officers on numbers of registered refugees and other claimants and requests funds and commodity support from the government. The agency prepared a special request to the GKR for 75 million riels to rehabilitate the existing Chak Angre Camp, organize a new city for refugees in Phnom Penh, construct barracks for refugees in the provinces, and to provide gifts of food, clothing, medicines, and building materials. The agency also had available back-up material for its request to the GKR Cabinet which totalled out the total need of refugees at 2,612,500,000 Rials.

The Directorate is responsible for the four refugee camps in the city. The Deputy Director indicated a high priority was to upgrade the camps. He apparently gave little thought about steps that might be taken to eliminate them. Resettlement is not a clear responsibility of the Directorate, although it has recently developed a budget request for the resettlement city.

This agency has two trucks which are used to distribute supplies. With a limited staff of capable personnel, and inadequate facilities and equipment, it is in its present form an unlikely agency through which an expanded relief program could be undertaken. Its responsibilities, such as for the gathering of statistics and registering people, could and should be enhanced with some advisory assistance.

2. Ministry of Labor and Social Action. The Ministry reported that it has a staff of 291 of which 69 are permanent and the remainder detailed from other ministries. It has a modest program for social welfare (as the Minister pointed out he has only a .04% of the National Budget) involving orphans, juvenile delinquents, old age assistance, and programs for peasant youth who have moved to the city. 110 is assisting in a technical training program which has a current class enrollment of 140. The Ministry is responsible for the collection of statistics on population, family size, etc. in relation to social welfare needs. The Ministry also administers a social security type of fund for dependents of factory workers. It was brought out that claims had declined because the workers and dependents could not get to Phnom Penh. This Ministry was an early recipient of a large consignment of Red Cross vehicles from Japan most of which have now been redistributed. It appears to other Ministries and agencies particularly the Ministry of Health.

There was no given reason why the functions and organization for the War Victims program were transferred from the Ministry. In any event, at present the Ministry is not operating programs in the key areas affecting improvement for refugees and war victims. Its possible participation and contribution, however, should not be overlooked.

3. Ministry of Community Development. This Ministry has as its director of operations a young man with US education under the previous AID program who is imaginative and dedicated but again has limited resources. It has a staff of 200, part of which are in provincial centers. The emphasis appears to be on youth but it was not clear what programs were underway except one noted below.

We were shown a CD area which contained dozens of shacks—some, though not all, occupied by refugees. The area had been the focus of a self-help lane building project. Dirt was hauled in by the Ministry's two trucks but all the labor was provided by the men, usually at night. Houses had in some cases
been moved back and in effect rebuilt to allow for the road. At his own expense the Director had established child day care centers (there are 10 throughout the city, he said) using one of his village workers as coordinator and women borrowed from the army as instructors.

Based on these brief impressions, we believe that the CD staff might well be a participant in efforts to resettle people and to improve present conditions of refugee sites.

4. Ministry of Health. Discussions with the Minister attempted to concentrate on the assistance given to people in areas where refugees have located. The Ministry has mobile units which are said to visit remote areas in the city periodically and give medical and sanitation advice and assistance. People requiring additional assistance go to dispensaries and to the hospitals where assistance is said to be free for the poor.

The Minister's interests obviously were widespread—hospital equipment, supplies, medicines—and his needs greatly exceeded resources available to him. Our impression is that the Ministry is capable and would use additional assistance effectively, but the demands are so widespread that special attention would be required to insure that assistance is brought directly to bear on the condition of refugees and war victims.

5. Ministry of Public Works. This Ministry appears to be the most experienced of any we visited. It has demonstrated the capacity to build and extend large dikes and roads around the city. It undoubtedly has great needs but at the same time it has equipment and capable staff.

The Ministry has a major responsibility which bears on the refugee situation. An immediate task was to clear a site 2 kms. square and arrange for water, drainage, and housing materials (bamboo and thatch to be provided by the Army) for 10,000 evacuees from Svay Rieng. This project could be expanded to other areas around Phnom Penh in land made available by the recent construction of major dikes. The problems are manifold—the Minister felt they probably were insoluble—yet he gave evidence that he was addressing them in a workable way. (See para 7, below regarding aid and assistance in housing for war refugees.)

6. Khmer Red Cross. This agency receives a budget of 9,000,000 riels for administrative purposes from the government's national budget. It has 60 full time employees and 50 part-time. On occasion other volunteers participate in the work. The Khmer Red Cross also receives donations from other Red Cross agencies throughout the world, and it conducts fund raising activities in Cambodia. In 1971 it received goods from other countries equivalent to more than $1,700,000 U.S. It also had nearly 1,400,000 riels for its programs.

The programs distribute medicines to hospitals and dispensaries; and vitamins, clothing and food to refugees and war victims. The KRC has a small dispensary of its own but its representatives also visit hospitals and refugee camps as resources are available. At times it receives requests from the Directorate of War Victims to assist in receiving and giving initial relief to refugees.

The impression was that this agency could receive and distribute more commodities—the kind that can directly reach refugees—but it does not have the capacity for major projects.

7. Association for Aid and Assistance in Housing for War Refugees. This Association was formed in about June 1972 at the request of the Premier. It has been chartered and has an initial allocation of 10,000,000 riels. It is a voluntary association which can receive donations from the government, from foreign donors, and from private sources. Its initial task is to assist in housing for the Ministry of Public Work's project to care for refugees from Svay Rieng. The project site is in the Por Mean Chey area. As part of the 2 km. square site, an initial group of barrack type houses are being built to accommodate the refugees now housed in the Cambodian hotel. The houses will be 4 x 40 meters and will accommodate 10 families each. They are being constructed of thatch bamboo and wood at a cost of about 50,000 riels each. The eventual plans call for more solid houses made of wood with metal roofing costing 150,000 riels.

Space is being provided for vegetable gardens and fish ponds nearby. The entire scheme calls for housing to accommodate 10,000 people, market places, schools, dispensaries, play fields, etc. The beginning is modest and should serve well as a pilot project which can be observed closely.
Other Agencies Involved With Refugees and War Victims

1. UNDP: This agency has a staff of thirty-five and among other functions serves as administrative agent for processing some $400,000 of UNICEF equipment and commodities consigned to Khmer ministries. These are mainly for education and health although the UNICEF's Bangkok representative recently indicated he was requesting that housing commodities be added. WHO has been supplying short-term experts to the Ministry of Health.

A UNDP project for the planning and development of Phnom Penh has special interest and application to the refugee problem. The plans call for major long-term developments involving city planning and satellite settlements in the Phnom Penh area. In addition the UNDP is deeply involved in resettlement planning stemming from its Prek Thnot irrigation project. We were most pleased with the leadership of the UNDP, the fact that it already had experts in technical areas of our direct concern, and its willingness to consider using AID support to focus on the refugee and war victims problem within the context of its ongoing program.

2. International Committee of the Red Cross. The head of the ICRC was on home leave but we talked with his assistant who is a medical doctor. He requests and receives allocations from Geneva for the purchase of supplies and medicines which are then distributed through the Khmer Red Cross. The doctor visits camps, centers and dispensaries regularly. ICRC has provided approximately $30,000 worth of pharmaceuticals and supplies to the Khmer Red Cross in the first 6 months of 1972.

Our impressions were that the ICRC had a capability which if enhanced would be able to bring direct relief and assistance to refugees and war victims, working in conjunction with the Khmer Red Cross. Though the capacities of the ICRC and Khmer Red Cross were limited, they could receive and dispense limited additional assistance.

Our understanding is that the ICRC's primary interest in Cambodia is prisoners of war. However, as these activities have been somewhat dormant, it presently focuses on assistance to refugees and war victims. If additional external advisors, e.g., medical workers are necessary, ICRC would presumably not be the agency involved. Rather the International League of Red Cross, which is also headquartered in Geneva, provides such resources. The League's representative is reportedly stationed in Saigon.

V. FINDINGS

1. There has been an influx of refugees into Phnom Penh since the NVA offensive beginning this spring. Net numbers of displaced persons in Phnom Penh are also believed to have increased considerably, even though the data are subject to question.

2. The requirements of the refugees for assistance, although difficult to quantify, are not being fully met by help currently being provided by the GKR and other donors. There is room for the USG to augment such help without a serious risk of displacing it. U.S.G. assistance should be portrayed as a response to the GKR's August 10, 1972 formal appeal to the U.S. and other friendly countries for assistance to refugees and war victims.

3. Needs of the refugees are for short-term medical attention, food, and shelter, as well as possibly cash allowances. However, there is a growing realization on the part of refugees and squatters that they will not be able to return to their villages soon. In the mid-term, they require an opportunity for temporary resettlement, primarily in undeveloped land within the greater Phnom Penh perimeter but also in the environs of some provincial towns, which will enable them to resume a more productive existence pending conditions permitting their return to their native provinces and villages.

4. Existing GKR programs dealing with the problem are uncoordinated and of varying capacities. External supervision and assistance will be required if they are to utilize additional resources effectively.

VI. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO MEET THE NEEDS

The team structured four broad conceptual approaches that could be used to meet the needs of refugees and war victims:

A. USG direct support of GKR programs through the application of U.S. aid-generated counterpart funds

1. Through attribution, or without U.S. direct supervision.
2. With U.S. involvement in GKR programs to help improve their effectiveness.
B. U.S. indirect support of GKR programs through an international agency in-country.
   1. Without involvement of such agency in GKR program planning
   2. With involvement of such agency in GKR program planning
C. The U.S. secures the help of a U.S. or international voluntary agency to come to Cambodia (Such as IVS, CARE, Catholic Relief, etc.)
   1. To work directly with the refugees
   2. To work in support of GKR programs
D. The U.S. conducts a more-or-less direct assistance program for refugees (Laos model)

VII. CONSTRAINTS IN SELECTING AN APPROACH

In selecting a recommended optimum approach for Cambodia, the team bore in mind the following judgmental factors:
A. The desire to see that assistance provided actually reaches refugees and does not get stuck “at the top of the percolator.”
B. The desire to avoid undue U.S. involvement and the introduction of U.S. personnel to the extent possible.
C. The desire not to introduce new agencies if one already in country could serve the same purpose.
D. The desire to utilize existing Khmer institutions to the maximum extent consonant with the prudent expenditure of U.S. funds.
E. The desire to strengthen the efficiency of existing Khmer programs attempting to meet refugee needs.
F. The desire to have, contained in the selected program, the seeds of a longer-term solution of the problem (not palliatives which have to be repeated endlessly.)

VIII. RECOMMENDED APPROACH

A. We believe that the optimum approach for Cambodia would be to provide an institutional grant to the United Nations Development Program Office in Cambodia. The grant would be used by the UNDP for the development and financial support of relief and resettlement projects.

Such projects would be developed by UNDP:
   In conjunction with the GKR Ministry of Plan, which is the UNDP’s counterpart agency
   In the context of the present UNDP program of resettlement planning, and planning for greater Phnom Penh, but strengthening and accelerating these UNDP program elements to meet the pressing needs of refugees and war victims.

As we see it, the grant could be made in dollars, with no source restrictions if possible, and freely convertible to local currency as needed. The grant will have to be structured in more detail if this approach is approved. We visualize three main uses [by the UNDP:]

1. For augmenting the funding of the commodities provided under the UNICEF, and possibly the WHO programs to Cambodia.

The UNICEF currently as a $400,000 p.a. program here providing educational materials, food, and pharmaceuticals through the Ministries of Education, Public Works, and Health. There is a plan to increase this program gradually over time to $600,000. A portion of our grant would immediately augment resources available for food, clothing, and shelter only. (The grant would be structured so as not to displace the phased increase in the UNICEF program). We believe that not more than $200,000-$300,000 could be absorbed in this fashion this year. Possibly also the WHO program could be augmented within this figure, but this will require further study.

2. For use by the UNDP in developing with the GKR, and funding, GKR projects for relief and resettlement in Phnom Penh and in provincial towns.

This would provide for funding of coordinated relief and resettlement programs, (using the Ministry of Plan and UNDP as the coordinating points) and involving the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Public Works, and Community Development, the Directorate of War Victims, and other ministries and agencies as the UNDP may deem appropriate. We envision about $500,000 as the maximum starting amount for these purposes—but the amount could be replenished as experience is gained.
The UNDP has already indicated the need for a short-term specialist in demography and refugee statistics. Probably others will be required. We recommend that about $50,000 be set aside for these purposes.

B. We also recommend that a grant be made to the International Red Cross/Cambodia, to be channeled through the Khmer Red Cross, to meet immediate needs of those in the camps, in hospitals, and coming in from the provinces. About $50,000 would be the limit to start, as current ICRC donations to the KRC average about $90,000 p.a.

IX. PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

From our observations and discussions, we have distilled the following short principles which we believe should guide the development of whatever programs are chosen.

A. Avoid making status of refugees too permanent

B. Avoid making status of refugees better than that of general population

C. Give high priority to the elimination of the most squalid, crowded, refugee settlements by giving occupants access to new resettlement areas

D. Have programs of Public Works, Community Development, Health, Agriculture, and Director General of War Victims complement each other in the resettlement zones.

Appendix I

LIST OF NON-U.S. PEOPLE VISITED

Mr. Chau xeng Ua, Minister of Labor and Social Welfare
Mr. Khy Taing Lim, Minister of Public Works
Mr. Hou Hong, Minister of Health
Mr. Yem Sakoeun, Director General of War Victims
Mr. Lao Bun Eng, Director of Special Operations of Community Development
Mr. Kouch Chiew, Deputy Director General of War Victims
Mr. Arthur Ewing, Director, United Nations Development Program
Dr. Francesco Borella, Acting Chief, International Committee of the Red Cross
Madame Chuop Samloph, Chairman, Khmer Red Cross
Mr. Dang Hung Dzoanh, First Secretary, Embassy of South Vietnam in Cambodia
Director, Prae Khet Mealea Hospital
Director, Soviet Friendship Hospital

Appendix II

ADDENDUM ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

According to information derived from meetings with the First Secretary of the Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh and the Director of the Direction of War Victims, there are five camps for Vietnamese refugees: 4 in Battambang with 4000 and one in the Cao Dai Temple in Phnom Penh with 800.

A visit to the Cao Dai camp disclosed conditions which were worse than those of other refugee camps yet the margin of difference was small. This camp is visited regularly by a representative from the Vietnamese Embassy who dispenses vitamins, medicines, clothing, etc. on the limited basis. His supplies are received by diplomatic pouch from Saigon and appeared to consist largely of AID donated materials. Apparently visits to camps in Battambang are quite infrequent and therefore their conditions compared to the Cao Dai camp undoubtedly are worse.

The male occupants may leave the encampments to work but they must return by 6:00 p.m. A police officer is in charge of each camp. The one in charge of the Cao Dai camp said he thought the occupants would be removed soon.

The refugees probably were all born in Cambodia. The reasons for their concentration in these camps are not clear; possibly they were just bypassed in the major exodus of Vietnamese in the spring-summer of 1970. The First Secretary had a breakdown of the refugees by categories: those without proper papers; those who had not paid non-resident fees; and some with legal problems. He said that since the social and economic agreement between Cambodia
and Vietnam, steps have been and continue to be taken to settle the disposition of these so-called refugees. Some apparently wish to remain in Phnom Penh or Battambang; others appear to want to go to Vietnam.

The topic of the Vietnamese refugees is obviously sensitive. The First Secretary obtained instructions over the phone from the Ambassador on how much he could say. He emphasized that Cambodia and Vietnam were addressing the problem of resettlement and/or reparation, progress though slow was being made, and the resolution of difficulties appeared to be promising.

The long time enmity between the two peoples undoubtedly is involved. A role for the UN is not clear, since its refugee office, which is not represented in Cambodia, is concerned with refugees who cross national boundaries. Such does not seem to be the case in this instance.

The possibility of US intervention has great perils though it might be considered. For example, contract air carriers might be used to pick up in Phnom Penh and Battambang those of the Vietnamese who wished to be repatriated.

Probably the best approach is to continue to encourage quietly the resolution of the problem by the two governments. The US should not discourage, however, a flow of goods from Saigon for ameliorating the physical conditions of the camp occupants. Also, it should be noted that the Khmer Red Cross includes the Cao Dai Pagoda in its visits.
Appendix III
PRESS REPORTS AND COMMENTARIES ON THE CRISIS IN CAMBODIA

[From The New York Times, Apr. 16, 1973]

HIGH CIVILIAN TOLL IS SEEN IN BOMBING OF CAMBODIA

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, April 16—Knowledgeable Western diplomats here say that they believe that the heavy United States bombing campaign in Cambodia is being carried out on the basis of inadequate intelligence data and often with imprecise control, causing high civilian casualties.

"The Americans are throwing air support around like a mad women," one diplomat said. "They don't know what it's having."

United States officials refuse to discuss any aspect of the bombing, which is directed from the embassy here. Instead, they refer all queries to the United States Pacific Command in Honolulu, which has consistently refused to go beyond its terse daily statement saying that the bombing is continuing at the request of the Cambodian Government.

Informed Western sources say, however, that American fighter-bomber pilots based in Thailand are flying an average of 250 strikes a day—almost as many in South Vietnam, which is much larger, during the heavy fighting there last year.

In addition, the sources say, Cambodia is being pounded by an average of 60 B-52's a day, each carrying up to 30 tons of bombs. One day recently, they say, the United States mounted an attack by 120 of the huge bombers.

Military experts say that the bombing has slowed the Cambodian insurges but not stopped them. The experts add, however, that the bombing has probably prevented the collapse of the Cambodian Army and, in turn, the fall of the Government of Marshal Lon Nol.

It is rare to find a high Government official critical of the bombing. One official said: "We know that some villagers have been hit by the bombs, but the other side has done worse. In a war like this some side effects are expected. So we consider it a side effect when bombs hit innocent civilians."

"In an interview the other day, Brig. Gen. Lon Non, brother of the Chief of State, who is regarded as the most influential man in Cambodia skirted most questions on the bombing. But at one point he said, "The Americans can use any means they like in order to get out of our territory."

Like most Cambodian officials, General Lon Nol does not publicly accept the assessment of Western intelligence sources that most of the fighting is now being done by Cambodian Insurgents rather than the North Vietnamese.

Another Government official said: "We do worry about the effect of the bombing on the people, but when you have a cancer on your skin and you take out the bad cells, some good cells must go along and you will probably have a scar on your skin. It is the same with the bombing and we think we must accept this."

DOCUMENTATION IMPOSSIBLE

In the nearly 40 days that the heavy bombing has been under way in Cambodia it has been impossible to document independently the impact on the civilian population.

Fighting has sharply restricted travel outside the capital and, at any rate, much of the bombing has been carried out in the 70 per cent of the country controlled by the insurgents.

Most of the United States jet fighter-bombers are reported to be guided to their targets by American forward air controllers in slow, low-flying observation planes.
But often, Western sources say, there are more bombers than American controllers and the strikes are directed by Cambodian controllers. Sometimes there are language problems. Furthermore, men in the field say that the Cambodians have often shown little concern for the civilian population in cases in which Cambodian ground troops badly need air support.

Some American bombers also have reportedly been authorized to conduct armed reconnaissance missions in which, a~craft flying at several hundred miles an hour go hunting without a forward air controller and attack when they find what looks like a suitable target.

_INCREASED_ BOMBING

In addition, there are said to be times when pilots are sent out to bomb “preplanned” targets—a set of map coordinates where enemy activity has been reported.

There have been delays ranging from several hours to a few days from the time the target is initially reported, approved, plotted and assigned; when the pilot finally arrives with his bombs the situation on the ground sometimes has changed drastically. All B-52 strikes are “preplanned.”

While some of the bombing is ordered on the basis of aerial photography, there is also said to be heavy reliance on Cambodian intelligence, which is thought to be gravely inadequate. Cambodia has very little of the electronic-surveillance equipment that the United States dropped widely in South Vietnam, and few if any Cambodian agents venture into the territory held by the Insurgents. Some of the bombing in the Insurgents’ territory is planned with the use of large-scale maps showing hamlets and house locations. But authoritative Western sources say that there have been reports of major population shifts in these regions and that the maps cannot be relied upon.

_ALMOST NO EVALUATION_

In South Vietnam ground troops sometimes followed B-52 strikes to evaluate the damage. But that is almost never done here because so much of the country is in hostile hands.

One diplomat who has worked in Vietnam said: “I don’t think the B-52’s are worth a damn the way they’re being used here. All we know is that they’re blowing up the ground, and they’re probably nailing a lot of civilians as well.”

Intelligence analysts say that the bombing has almost certainly alienated some of the population. The insurgents have already begun telling people that the leaders of the Government in Phnom Penh have become the “slaves” of the Americans and that the fight now is to save the country from American domination. It is the same argument the Communists used effectively against American intervention in South Vietnam. While it may sound absurd to some Americans, it rings true in the countryside of Indochina.

“The question we ought to be asking ourselves right now,” said one American privately, “is whether the military gains are worth the political costs.”

Diplomats and educated Cambodians outside the Government say that the military situation has never looked worse and many strongly fear that no amount of bombing will turn the tide.

“You just cannot win a revolutionary war with air power,” said one diplomat with considerable military experience. “With all due respect, you Americans lost the war in Vietnam because you insisted on fighting to the last B-52.”

_MORE BOMBING REPORTED_

Honolulu, April 15 (AP)—The United States Pacific command said that American heavy bombers and tactical aircraft conducted operations over Cambodia today but declined to say if they were supporting a South Vietnamese push into Cambodia.

The air operations marked the 40th straight day that B-52’s have been used over Cambodia at the request of the Government in Phnom Penh, according to the command’s daily report.
U.S. Air Support Deemed Indispensable to Cambodia

(By Henry Kamff)

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, March 23—"American air power is necessary and indispensable," said Maj. Gen. Sosthene Fernandez. "Yes, you can say indispensable," he repeated with emphasis.

Foreign military experts here rarely find themselves in agreement with the Chief of Cambodian General Staff, but they accept his view that without the heavy daily bombing, rocketing and strafing of insurgent forces his army would collapse.

Yet reliable American sources report that hardly any North Vietnamese or Vietnamese forces are still fighting against the Cambodian Army.

Increasingly, they say, Cambodian rebels fight their own war, although they continue to rely heavily on Vietnamese logistical support and coordination.

When Cambodia was first embroiled in war three years ago, few Cambodians were fighting against Government troops. The enemy then was Vietnamese Communist units who had been using Cambodian territory to stage their operations in South Vietnam and who had turned against Cambodia instead.

In those days military experts here thought that the Cambodian armed forces were developing a pace and that they would be able to cope with the rebels if the Vietnamese Communist units withdrew.

Events have proved this false. With no Vietnamese main-line units directly engaged against the Cambodian Army and with only about 1,500 Vietnamese Communist "seeded" through the rebel units, the Government army of the some 40,000 men finds itself outfought.

Despite its much greater numerical strength—the real number is unknown because of heavy payroll padding—and despite its light bombers, armored personnel carriers, artillery and other American contributions, the Government army has needed American air support whenever its enemy applies pressure.

Foreign military sources believe that the Government troops are deficient in every respect other than equipment—in leadership, in tactics, and in the will to fight.

SITUATION UNDER CONTROL

Asked how the military situation stood, General Fernandez replied:

"We have it under control. Whenever they capture territory, we recapture it."

The general said that air power made the difference. He continued:

"We have our very powerful air force. But it is not possible for us to have air power everywhere. When we have two or three operations at the same time we cannot do it."

In that case, the Cambodian high command requests American air support through the office of the air attaché at the United States Embassy, Lt. Col. David Opfer. According to American officials here, the embassy's role is largely to channel communications between the Cambodian command and the United States Air Force in Thailand.

Neither Colonel Opfer nor any other member of the defense attaché's office is authorized to discuss this procedure with the press. No information is provided about American air operations in Indochina at any American installation closer than the headquarters of the Commander in Chief, Pacific, in Honolulu.

The number of missions is not made known even there or at the Pentagon. But General Fernandez, who also does not know it, said that the number was adequate to the needs.

An informed Western source said that the sale of United States air activity made it clear he had underestimated American willingness to continue bombing in Cambodia after the cease-fire in Vietnam. American planes stopped bombing until mid-February in the hope that the rebels would accept a Government offer to halt the war.

But the war continued, and, the level of bombing, according to informed sources, is as high now as it ever was.

The United States sends fighter-bombers and B-52's; when it is convinced that the Cambodian Army is about to lose an important population center or military position or faces heavy casualties.
American sources said observations by American forward air controllers—light planes that fly low reconnaissance over target areas—determined whether the bombers were sent in. General Fernandez said that most of the information was supplied by Cambodian forward air controllers.

Presumably Cambodian spotter planes more readily pass on approvingly requests for air support.

'A LITTLE DIFFICULT FOR US'

Ground forces familiar with the destructive power of the United States Air Force, naturally prefer to attack after the bombers have done their work.

While American officials refuse to discuss details of B-52 raids over Cambodia, General Fernandez said they were used against concentrations of enemy forces. This is a refinement of the strategic use of the B-52’s that was developed in Vietnam. The giant bombers were originally intended to be used against installations rather than troops in the open.

General Fernandez said the principal American restriction on the use of airpower applied to populated places. He said:

"The VC now mingle with the population in the villages so we won't hurt them. That is a little difficult for us. The American won't bomb them there."

The small, voluble general, whose name comes from Spanish forebears, is one of those Cambodians who maintain the fiction that their only enemy is the Vietnamese Communists and continually refers to the opposing side as the "VC." He continued:

"Then it becomes our job. We appeal to the population to leave and isolate the VC. Then our planes strafe round the edge of the village to frighten the villagers. They are more frightened than the VC.

BOMBING RESUMED

"They flee and come to tell us. Once they have left the village, they come to ask us to bomb it. They themselves come to ask us to destroy everything, because they have the VC. Whenever they come they bring unhappiness.

"Of course, the villagers are very sad about their belongings, their houses, their lands, but they want us to bomb everything to drive out the VC."

"We do all we can to avoid civilian casualties, but one cannot always be certain that all civilians have fled. Sometimes they force the men to stay as prisoners, but they let the women and children flee."

The question of whether the United States uses its far more destructive air power on more solid information about the presence or absence of civilians in target areas could not be answered. It could not be learned whether the United States accepts without separate verification Cambodian Intelligence on who is in a target area.

Military experts who have visited areas near Phnom Penh after American tactical air strikes report that nothing was left standing above ground in a section one-kilometer square.

Meanwhile, the strategy of the rebels appears to be to bring the war closer to the capital, and wherever they do, American air strikes follow.

Similarly, military experts are convinced that none of the provincial capitals in eastern and southern Cambodia that are not already in Communist hands could hold out without American air covers.

Whenever the Communists block the vital highway between Phnom Penh and the country's only seaport at Kompong Som, it is American air power that plays the major role in clearing it.

Military experts see no likelihood that the Cambodian armed forces can reach a level of competence that will make the use of American air power less needed than General Fernandez deems it now. They wonder how long the United States will—or can—prevent the Cambodian Army from collapsing by destroying villages and devastating great stretches of the country side.

[From The Washington Post, Apr. 8, 1973]

CAMBODIA DEPENDS ON U.S. PLANES

(By H. D. S. Greenway)

PHNOM PENG, April 7—The windows and doors of this capital shake and rattle in the night, as if by an unseen hand. It is caused by the pressure waves that follow the long rumble of exploding bombs—the unmistakable sound of B-52 raids.
The raids are moving closer now, sometimes to within 20 miles of the capital, according to military sources, as Cambodia undergoes its heaviest air bombardment of the war.

With approximately 140,000 men, the government's forces in Phnom Penh outnumber the insurgents 3 to 1—hardly enough to defeat the well-armed guerrillas in the field, but enough to hold the capital. That is the basic nature of the Cambodian military stalemate, but more and more the government forces are coming to depend on American airpower.

The Cambodian insurgents are now into the third month of a well-coordinated and sustained offensive that began shortly after the Vietnam peace agreement was signed in Paris.

Today, all the major roads leading out of the capital are cut, and the insurgents hold long stretches along both banks of the Mekong River south of the city. Although food is not yet in short supply, cutting the Mekong has caused severe fuel shortages and rationing in Phnom Penh.

[U.S. Air Force cargo planes have begun airlifting ammunition and other war materiel to Cambodian forces because the Communists continue to blockade all normal supply routes to Phnom Penh, military sources said Saturday, according to UPI.]

In addition, the insurgents have pushed the government troops out of the heavily populated areas south of the capital, isolating the town of Takeo and inflicting defeat after defeat on the demoralized government troops.

Because of the shortages in Phnom Penh, the opening of the Mekong for convoys coming up the river has become the government's number one priority, Chief of Staff General Sosthone Fernandez said this morning. For the past several days all available reserves have been diverted to the talks, according to Fernandez, and the B-52s have been heavily bombing insurgent positions along the banks.

Fernandez said that most of the most dangerous points along the river had now fallen to government troops, but that fighting in South Vietnam now prevented the convoys from reaching even the border of Cambodia.

U.S. AIR POWER

The massive American air intervention almost certainly saved the isolated district town of Kompong Thom from being overrun and has been able to break up concentrations of insurgents cutting the roads, which the government forces were not able to do alone. But American airpower has been able only to help sustain, not break, the basic stalemate that is the war in Cambodia.

Statistics are hard to come by here—American officials have been told not to discuss the bombing—but estimates of the number of B-52 sorties per day run from 60 on the average to more than 100 some days.

B-52 raids are nothing new in the sparsely populated northeastern provinces along the Vietnamese border. But in recent weeks the B-52s have also been bombing the heavily populated areas in central Cambodia to bolster the flagging fortunes of the Cambodian Army.

There are no accurate statistics as to the number of civilian casualties that have occurred as a direct result of the new American bombing in Cambodia, but both Cambodian and foreign sources say it is not possible, especially in the densely populated areas near Takeo, south of the capital, to employ such massive bombing without killing a considerable number of noncombatants.

It is said that the Americans do make an effort not to bomb indiscriminately, according to informed sources, a formal request must come from the Cambodian high command, and there has to be a clear indication that the government units involved are in immediate danger of being defeated before American officials are allowed to unleash the B-52s.

In practice, however, the Cambodian army can nearly always make a case for immediate defeat without airpower, and very often it is true. The overworked American officials here cannot possibly check out every request thoroughly, and thus have less than complete knowledge of the area where the bombs are falling.

There are no American advisers on the ground near the front. Following the American thrust into Cambodia in 1970, legislative restrictions were placed by the Cooper-Church amendment, on U.S. operations there to prevent "another Vietnam." These included barring American combat troops and military advisers from operating on the ground in Cambodia. But American air attaches do
fly often to observe the area, according to reliable sources, and one can occasionally see American forward air control planes from Thailand refueling at Phnom Penh airport.

[A U.S. Air Force observation aircraft was shot down Friday over central Cambodia and its pilot the only person aboard, was killed, the U.S. Pacific Command said Saturday, according to UPI. The command said B-52s continued attacks against Communist positions Saturday at the request of the Cambodian government.]

Besides the B-52s, American fighter-bombers based in Thailand have also been very active in close support of Cambodian units, and many of the little villages along the roads leading away from the capital have been reduced to rubble.

The massive use of American airpower to keep poorly led and corrupt armies in the field has become a familiar story in Indochina. But in Cambodia, the regime being kept in power is less popular and less effective, and the morale of the army is worse than has been the case in Vietnam or in Laos in recent years.

In contrast, the Cambodian insurgents, who are trained and advised by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, seem to be growing stronger. Observers here have been surprised that the current offensive has been as sustained and intense as it has.

In the best of times, the Cambodian government controls only the area 20 to 50 miles in any direction from the capital as well as most of the rice-rich province of Battambang in the northwest corner of the country on the Thai border.

The government’s life lines are the Mekong River, running southeast from Phnom Penh to the Vietnamese border; Route 4, running southwest to the sea, and Route 5, running northwest along the great inland lake, the Tonle Sap, to Battambang.

Routes 4, running southeast beside the Mekong, Routes 2 and 3, running south to Takeo, and Route 6, running northeast to Kompong Cham, are also important arteries connecting the capital with the populated areas under government control.

Except for isolated government towns behind the lines, such as Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Kompot and Kompong Thom, the rest of the country—nearly 80 per cent of the land mass, but less than half the population—is in the hands of the insurgents.

The bulk of the estimated 40,000 North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in the country are to be found east of the Mekong in the provinces bordering Vietnam.

But most of the fighting in central Cambodia is being carried out by 40,000 to 50,000 insurgents loosely called Khmer Rouge. In fact, they cover a wide political spectrum. Some owe their allegiance to Prince Norodom Sihanouk; some are Communists and some are little more than opportunists and bandits.

There are differences even among the Cambodian Communists and one of the problems in Cambodia is that there is no single group that can be said to speak for all the groups with whom the government could negotiate.

WELL COORDINATED FORCES

Even though the Cambodian insurgents are politically diverse, they are well-coordinated militarily, and their coordination is improving, observers here say.

The pattern of fighting in recent years has involved insurgent attempts to cut the Mekong as well as the important roads which run out of Phnom Penh like spokes on a wheel. Usually, however, the insurgents keep the government troops shifting from one front to another. Only rarely have they been able to cut all the roads and the river, as they have now, and then only for a short period of time.

The insurgents have tried to knock off some of the isolated provincial capitals and towns. Although they have come close to the gates of the capital, they have never mounted an all-out assault on Phnom Penh. Nor, in the opinion of most observers here, do they have the military capability to capture Phnom Penh.

The aim of the insurgents here, it is believed, is not to capture the capital, but to so disrupt life in Phnom Penh and to throttle such defeats on government