HEARING
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CONNECTED WITH REFUGEES AND ESCAPEES
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Statement of—  
Roderic L. O'Connor, Coordinator for Supporting Assistance, Agency for International Development; accompanied by Hon. William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State; and Maj. Curtis G. Cook, USAF, Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense; Dr. Patricia A. McCreedy, Public Health Adviser, USAID Mission to Laos; Jack L. Williamson, Deputy Assistant Director for Regional Affairs, USAID Mission to Laos; Andrew F. Antippas, Embassy, Phnom Penh; Thomas J. Corcoron, Director for Lao and Cambodian Affairs, Department of State; Robert Blackburn, Embassy, Phnom Penh; and Ernest L. Kerley, Department of State

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(III)
The subcommittee met, pursuant to recess, at 9:50 a.m., in room 2228, New Senate Office Building, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Kennedy and Fong.
Also present: Dale S. de Haan, counsel; Jerry M. Tinker, staff consultant; and Mrs. Dorothy Parker, assistant to Senator Fong.

Senator Kennedy. The subcommittee will come to order.

If the decade of death and devastation we have brought to Vietnam has taught us any single lesson, it is that the road to peace is not the road of wider war.

And now, because President Nixon has once again so clearly failed to learn that lesson, the United States and the world community of nations have this morning entered a new and far more deadly and dangerous era in the Indochina war.

The mining of Haiphong Harbor is a senseless act of military desperation by a President incapable of finding the road to peace. Again and again in the tragic history of American involvement in Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson wisely resisted the siren call of the military planners for the mining of Haiphong. Now, President Nixon has succumbed to that foolhardy proposal, and the mines are being dropped.

In a sense, the dropping of the mines is the most vivid demonstration we have yet had of the total failure of the President's plan to end the war in Indochina and the bankruptcy of his unfulfilled plan for peace. For years, we have known the vast international risks of mining Haiphong, and the negligible military benefit it can bring on the battlefields of South Vietnam.

What sense does it make to challenge the Soviet Union in the coastal waters of Indochina, when we ought to be challenging the North Vietnamese at the peace table in Paris?

What sense does it make to mine Haiphong in North Vietnam when weeks and months will pass before the action can have any possible effect on the current offensive in South Vietnam?

What sense does it make to adopt a military course of action on the war with a maximum of potential confrontation with the Soviet Union and a minimum potential gain in Indochina?
It was 4 years ago this spring that President Johnson began to implement the fragile decisions that had the first real possibility of leading us out of Vietnam. And now, by some cruel irony, in the fourth year of the Presidency of Richard Nixon, in spite of all the promises we have heard to end the war, we are witnessing one of the most drastic steps in the entire history of the escalation of the war. At this crucial time of crisis in Vietnam I believe that history and the American people will record that President Nixon has taken a terribly wrong and ill-conceived turn.

It never had to be this way. After tens of thousands of American lives have been lost and tens of billions of dollars have been spent, after hundreds of thousands of North and South Vietnamese have been killed, after millions of civilian victims have felt the awful horror of the war, the world is ready for peace in Indochina, and all the President can find to give us is more war.

The President who promised peace is bringing wider war. And now, because of his blindness on the war, more Americans and North and South Vietnamese troops will die, more innocent men and women and children will be killed and more American prisoners will be taken, and all our hopes for reconciliation with the Soviet Union are placed in jeopardy.

I yield to none in my condemnation of the invasion from the North. But I also know that the way to the peace table lies clearly at the entrance to the conference table in Paris, and not at the entrance to the harbor of Haiphong. So long as we have a President who is imprisoned by the war, so long as we have a President whose only reflex is the belligerence and aggression we heard last night, so long as we have a President whose only real goal is the pursuit of the phantom of military victory on the battlefield, we shall never have peace in Indochina.

The hearing today continues the subcommittee’s public inquiry into the problems of the victims of the war in Indochina. Yesterday, we reviewed the fast deteriorating situation in Vietnam. Of special concern this morning, is the situation in Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam.

In early 1969, Laos became the principal target of a “no holds barred” air war over Indochina. Until recently, when the focus of the Indochina war again shifted to Vietnam, a rising number of refugees and civilian casualties told us of the intensity of the conflict—and the devastating impact the air war was having on the civilian population in Laos.

Although some limited progress is being made in meeting the needs of the Laotian war victims, there is, I feel, a continuing tendency on the part of our national leadership to underplay the serious dimensions of people problems throughout Indochina. We noted yesterday, for example, that it took 6 months for our Government to approve Saigon’s request for little more than $1 million to help care for over 700,000 orphans in South Vietnam. And the casual approach of our Government to the needs and the impact of 1 million new refugees in that devastated country, is distressing to this subcommittee and all Americans.

But nowhere has our sense of national priorities overseas, and the traditional humanitarian concerns of the American people, been more
distorted than in Cambodia. Estimates put the number of Cambodian refugees, over the last 2 years, at more than 2 million. Civilian casualties have numbered in the thousands. The public record suggests that our Government has not only rejected all appeals for help, but that it is the policy of our Government not to become involved with the problem of civilian war victims in Cambodia. Given the vast amounts of military hardware we are pumping into that country—hardware which helps create these war victims—our policy towards the people problems of Cambodia defies understanding.

But the President has told us that the bloodbath will continue. He told us last evening that the peace long promised the American people is nowhere in sight. He told us that Vietnamization has failed. He told us that we will try, again, to do from the air what we could not do for the past decade from the ground. We will have more war because we have missed the opportunities for peace—because we continue to play great power games over the future of Indochina rather than allowing the peoples of the area to sort out their own future.

And so, as we meet this morning, Indochina's regional crisis of people escalates. Each day of war will bring another day of human suffering. More civilians become casualties or die. More children are maimed or orphaned. More refugees flee devastated villages and towns—in North and South Vietnam and in Laos and Cambodia.

And until this tragic war finally ends, this subcommittee will regrettably—but with determination—continue to make the case that the civilian population and the plight of war victims throughout the region must be a matter of vital concern to the United States.

Before welcoming our witnesses, I would like to recognize Senator Fong.

Senator Fong. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since you have brought up the question of what President Nixon said last night, I want to say that the President had no alternative except to do what he did—to order the mining of the ports of North Vietnam and the interdiction of shipping to these ports for the purpose of denying the North Vietnamese the supplies needed for the waging of the war.

I have long advocated the mining of Haiphong. I think the President has done everything a President could do to bring this war to an honorable conclusion. But, with every proposal, he has been rebuffed, with insolence and intransigence. Imagine what would happen to the 17 million people of South Vietnam if North Vietnam conquered them. What a bloodbath we would see. Imagine what would happen to 65,000 American soldiers in South Vietnam if North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam and held them hostage. I do hope that the people of America will support the President in this move to protect our men, to curtail the war and to prevent a bloodbath in South Vietnam.

I want to welcome you, Mr. O'Connor and Ambassador Sullivan, and to thank you for taking the time at this critical period in world history and of crisis in Indochina to come here again to inform the members of this subcommittee and the public of the current situation in Laos and Cambodia.

As I have previously stated, with the massive six-pronged invasion by North Vietnam, using troops, tanks, armored vehicles, missiles,
and artillery, the mask of hypocrisy has been torn from the war in Vietnam.

Not only the people of South Vietnam, but the people in Laos and Cambodia have been the innocent and unfortunate victims of this horrendous aggression on the part of the North Vietnamese.

In Laos and Cambodia, as in South Vietnam, the people are fleeing from their homes. But for this North Vietnamese aggression, there would be no refugees in this area and no refugee problems with which the peoples of the world and this subcommittee would be concerned.

I am much impressed with the courage and determination of these people not to fall into the hands or control of the North Vietnamese. Some of these people have been forced to flee not once, but time and time again. Even after they had worked hard and were hopefully being resettled in what they prayed would be a safe area, they have again been faced with the ugly reality of the North Vietnamese Army closing in upon them.

I understand that there are approximately 100,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos—aiding and abetting the Communist Pathet Lao. Or, are they now called the Lao Peoples Liberation Army?

I am much impressed with what our Government is doing to alleviate the suffering of the quarter of a million or so refugees generated by the North Vietnamese aggressors.

The follow-up review of the refugee relief program in Laos, prepared by the Comptroller General in response to Senator Kennedy's request, showed that AID has increased its pre-Nixon contribution for fiscal year 1969 of $8,423,000 to $16,284,000 for fiscal year 1972. That is almost double what AID contributed in fiscal year 1969 to alleviate refugee suffering, to help resettle the refugees, to educate them, and to develop their economy.

Public Law 480 commodity assistance has increased from $800,000 in fiscal year 1969 to $1,400,000 in fiscal year 1972. The contributions of other government agencies apparently have also been increased.

Especially in view of the vastness of the problem, I am most impressed with the GAO report as to the AID program.

The GAO report, at page 10, notes "the high priority assigned refugee affairs" by AID and credits AID for many improvements in the program since the previous GAO reports. I should like to hear from you, gentlemen, on your plans to further improve this program.

Incidentally, I find nothing in this report to substantiate newspapers reports that AID is financing any military activities. The GAO report points out that AID has financed some assistance such as food and medical services for military and paramilitary personnel and their dependents. These people, too, are victims of the North Vietnamese aggressors—they, too, need help.

I feel the only humane thing, the only moral thing, is to feed these people, too, and to see that they, too, receive much-needed medical services. Whether that assistance be with AID funds is not the most important consideration.

The vital thing is that these people, too, are human; these people, too, are hungry; these people, too, are sick and wounded—these people, too, need help. Whether that help comes from AID funds or DOD or CIA funds is a secondary consideration.
In any event, apparently the payment of this needed assistance is being taken over by the other agencies involved.

With respect to Cambodia, the refugee problem seems to be very different from that in South Vietnam or Laos. The North Vietnamese invasions have resulted in Cambodians fleeing from Communist controlled territory, and Cambodians fleeing from combat activity and air strikes. Apparently, the Cambodians return to their homes as soon as possible or are taken care of by their families.

The United States has no specific program for assisting refugees in Cambodia. That is solely in the control of the Cambodian Government.

I am, nonetheless, struck by the absence of hard data as to the number of refugees and of war related casualties. The GAO report cites data furnished by Cambodian Government officials, but concludes that the number of refugees in Cambodia is largely conjectural and that their investigators found no basis for assessing the reliability of any overall figures on refugees in Cambodia. Nonetheless, I feel the GAO report has served a useful purpose in describing the conditions of the refugee centers which were visited.

The Cambodian Government, according to the GAO report, indicates it is taking into account the Cambodian tradition of families caring for their own in time of need and not counting on government, strangers, or foreigners indefinitely to assume that burden.

This is an admirable tradition—so rarely found today in the so-called developed or modern parts of the globe.

As long as the size of the burden is not beyond the Cambodians' own capacity to deal with in a traditional manner, I feel we should not rush in and help destroy that admirable tradition of self-reliance. From everything we now know, families and friends do take care of the largest part of these displaced people. That group that cannot be handled in this manner whatever the reason might be, are apparently also receiving some individual assistance as a result of the Cambodian Government's efforts, in keeping with the general standard of living in Cambodia.

According to the GAO report, apparently the Cambodian Government had not as of October 1971 requested humanitarian assistance from the United States. While the Cambodian Government effort is not fully coordinated, I feel that unless requested by the Cambodian Government or the international organizations, we should not interfere with the operations of this independent government's activities.

I see no reason for our having a guilt complex about the refugees—we have not created them. The United States is prepared to help these people meet their needs regardless of the fact that we did not cause the distress, but only when their government indicates such help would be useful and necessary.

On the other hand, I am most anxious to learn from you and the field representatives I understand you were to have here today, exactly what the refugee picture is in Laos and Cambodia as of this time.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much, Senator Fong.

We welcome this morning the Honorable Roderic L. O'Connor, Coordinator for Supporting Assistance, Agency for International Development; the Honorable William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs,
Department of State; Major Curtis G. Cook, USAF, Assistant for Laos and Cambodia, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs, Department of Defense, and accompanying them are Mr. Jack L. Williamson, Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Refugee Affairs, USAID Mission to Laos; and Dr. Patricia A. McCreedy, Public Health Advisor, Project Manager, Public Health Division, USAID Mission to Laos.

Ambassador Sullivan, you may proceed.

STATEMENTS OF HON. WILLIAM H. SULLIVAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, AND HON. RODERIC L. O'CONNOR, COORDINATOR FOR SUPPORTING ASSISTANCE, AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ACCOMPANIED BY MAJ. CURTIS G. COOK, U.S. AIR FORCE, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; DR. PATRICIA A. McCREEDY, PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISOR, USAID MISSION TO LAOS; JACK L. WILLIAMSON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR REGIONAL AFFAIRS, USAID MISSION TO LAOS; ANDREW F. ANTIPPAS, EMBASSY, PHNOM PENH; THOMAS J. CORCORAN, DIRECTOR FOR LAO AND CAMBODIAN AFFAIRS; ROBERT BLACKBURN; AND ERNEST L. KERLEY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Fong, once again I am privileged to appear before this subcommittee to discuss refugees and war victims in Indochina. Our proceedings are overshadowed by the tragic events which are occurring in the Indochinese States and by the mounting toll of refugees and civilian victims who have been caught up in the war. Once again I commend this subcommittee and its staff for bringing these facts before the conscience of the world and for emphasizing the hardships which war visits upon innocent civilians.

Yesterday the subcommittee discussed Vietnam where the most violent fighting is now occurring as a result of a massive North Vietnamese invasion. Today we are to discuss Laos and Cambodia where fighting has been significantly reduced as the North Vietnamese forces have concentrated the full fury of their efforts in South Vietnam. However, the history of the past year since my last appearance before this subcommittee has not been a calm one for either Laos or Cambodia.

In Laos the North Vietnamese attacked in unprecedented numbers and with particular brutality at the end of last December. Using for the first time heavy artillery that included the 130 millimeter cannon, considerable numbers of tanks, and occasional forays by Mig aircraft, the North Vietnamese drove the Lao defenders from the Plaine des Jarres and threatened Long Tieng in the north of Laos. In the south of Laos the North Vietnamese have taken over all of the Bolovens Plateau.

These two actions produced the bulk of the refugees who were forced to flee the war during the past year. Despite these two fairly
large dislocations, by February of this year the number of refugees throughout Laos has decreased by about 25 percent from last June's alltime high of 317,000. Resettlement efforts have gone reasonably well, although the Lao Government faces the unresolved problem of what to do with the displaced mountain peoples of northern Laos. Mr. O'Connor and members of the mission in Laos will be prepared to discuss these events in greater detail.

In Cambodia, as Senator Fong has indicated, the refugee situation is substantially different from that in Laos. Although the North Vietnamese control roughly one-third of the territory of the Khmer Republic and although an estimated 2 million people have at one time or another been displaced by this invasion, there are only a limited number of persons who live in refugee camps or in a conspicuous refugee status. This circumstance results from the way in which the Khmer population has reacted to the war. From the basis of their expanded family system the Khmer have absorbed most of the displaced persons into their households in Phnom Penh and the larger provincial capitals.

Consequently the visible refugee population is small and the Khmer Government takes considerable pride in attempting to cope with it through its own institutions and its own organization. The Khmer have received external assistance in the form of goods and services, particularly from Japan, to aid them in this task. They have, however, made a point of refraining from asking the United States for assistance in this field.

Mr. O'Connor, in his statement, will comment in more detail on these matters. Mr. Antippas, who has come from our mission in Phnom Penh and who has responsibility within that mission for following the refugee problem, is prepared to supplement Mr. O'Connor's remarks.

Mr. Chairman, if you agree, I should like to introduce Mr. O'Connor, who has a prepared statement to read which will cover both Laos and Cambodia.

Senator Kennedy. Very well.

Mr. O'Connor. Mr. Chairman, I gather you want to start on Cambodia. And I have a brief statement on Cambodia, and a brief summary statement on Laos.

Senator Kennedy. Before we start, perhaps I could ask a question of Major Cook; . . .

The President talked last evening about the 20,000 civilian casualties that had been inflicted on the South Vietnamese by the recent invasion. I was wondering if you could give us any information to elaborate on that—where they were, and how those figures were reached. We heard yesterday from administration personnel, and we heard nothing about it. I am just wondering how those figures were reached so fast.

Major Cook. I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, I have no information on that.

Mr. Sullivan. I have some limited information, Mr. Chairman. Between 7,000 and 7,500 were killed, according to the estimates, and around 14,000 were wounded.

Now, these civilians are mostly in the two towns that were taken under very heavy shelling attacks by the North Vietnamese. One is
the city of Quang Tri and the other is An Loc. These casualties are at this moment estimates, but they are the best estimates that we could arrive at in a rather chaotic situation.

Senator Kennedy. What do you estimate to be the number of civilian casualties in the north—the number of people who have been killed by American bombing?

Mr. Sullivan. In North Vietnam?

Senator Kennedy. Yes.

Mr. Sullivan. We have no solid basis to make an estimate.

Senator Kennedy. You should be able to make an estimate. You must have aerial surveillance of villages and towns that have been hit. We saw this morning on television that boats have been accidentally hit. We have heard the charges by the North Vietnamese of accidental bombing. What assessments are you making about this? Or are you?

Mr. Sullivan. We are having a debate on the North Vietnamese figures. The figures that they gave, for example, in the bombing of Haiphong, as I recall it, were 18 civilians killed at Haiphong.

Senator Kennedy. You mean our estimate is that 18 civilians were killed?

Mr. Sullivan. No; this was the North Vietnamese statement as to what they lost in that particular bombing, the bombing that took place a couple of Sundays ago.

Senator Kennedy. There is no aerial surveillance of the damage done by the U.S. bombing of the North?

Mr. Sullivan. Yes; there is photographic surveillance which follows. I think, for example, the city of Hanoi has been almost 50 percent evacuated by the direction of the North Vietnamese Government.

Senator Kennedy. Are they somewhere out in the countryside?

Mr. Sullivan. They are out in the countryside.

Senator Kennedy. Isn’t that where most of the bombing is going on, though?

Mr. Sullivan. Not in North Vietnam.

Senator Kennedy. Where is it going on?

Mr. Sullivan. Against military targets, mostly petroleum installations, railroad crossings, and places where there are stockpiles of military equipment.

Senator Kennedy. And there is no bombing of villages or communities?

Mr. Sullivan. The North Vietnamese Government has dispersed its people away from these targets as best they can.

Senator Kennedy. Well, we always seem so willing to talk about the wounded and the civilian casualties caused by the North Vietnamese, which is continuing, but when it comes to what is happening to the civilian population of North Vietnam under U.S. bombs we are never able to get satisfactory information. We hear a great deal about how refugees have been created by the recent North Vietnamese offensive but, a year ago, we didn’t hear how refugees were being created by the American invasion in Cambodia. We can’t have it both ways. We can’t hear the President tell of refugees who have been created by the offensive sweep of North Vietnamese forces into South
Vietnam and not ask—what about the offensive sweep of the United States and South Vietnamese forces into Cambodia last year.

Certainly, that is one of the reasons that many of us are rather chary about evaluations and the way figures are reached. It always seems, at least from my point of view, to be rather one sided. No one is trying to make a brief about the violence and terrorism perpetrated by the North Vietnamese, or the Viet Cong, or trying to excuse the murder of civilians at Hue. But when we deplore that kind of violence, such as the killing of innocents in Hue, we also ought to deplore the killing by assassination through the Phoenix program, too.

I don’t know how many Americans know about the estimated 48,000 civilians of the Vietcong infrastructure who have been killed by American-sponsored assassination teams. But I just think we ought to be evenhanded in trying to evaluate the impact of the war by both sides in human terms. We ought to condemn the brutality, the killings and the violence that has been perpetrated by the North Vietnamese—but there has been a lot on our side, too.

There are these antipersonnel bombs [illustrating] that throw thousands of little pieces of shrapnel into people and tear their flesh. When we review the various American weapons being used, the antipersonnel weapons—and every year the list grows with every kind of weapon imaginable to tear the flesh of human beings—I think we have to try and reevaluate what these weapons do in terms of human beings. We ought to be more realistic and assume that there were more than 18 people killed by the recent bombing of Haiphong. I saw a different figure than that. I can’t put my finger on it right now. But it is considerably higher than 18.

But we are supposed to be here listening to you Mr. O’Connor.

Mr. O’Connor. Mr. Chairman, I have a brief statement on the situation in Cambodia as we see it today.

Mr. Chairman, as Ambassador Sullivan has indicated, the situation in Cambodia is quite different from that prevailing in Laos and Vietnam.

Senator Kennedy. You were very kind to provide it for us in advance, and I appreciate it. I want to thank the Department for making available your statement to us in advance.

Are you going to go into the Cambodian section of your statement?

Mr. O’Connor. Yes. I submitted two statements, one on Cambodia and one on Laos. On Laos I would prefer to give you at this point a very short summary—to make a very short summary of the statement I have submitted. I did not summarize the Cambodian statement, I can attempt to do so.

Senator Kennedy. No; we can go through that.

Mr. O’Connor. Mr. Chairman, as Ambassador Sullivan has said, in Cambodia most displaced persons tend to congregate in Phnom Penh and have generally been able to find temporary shelter with relatives and friends. Some have had to construct makeshift housing in and around the capital. Relatively few persons—some 15,000, according to our latest information—are housed in refugee camps or official resettlement areas.

Our best estimate is that since March 1970, about 800,000 additional people have come to Phnom Penh on their own. However, reliable statistics are extremely difficult to find. Most people do not ordinarily
report their movements to the authorities. As the February 2 GAO report to this subcommittee points out on page 2, “The total number of refugees in Cambodia is largely conjectural. There is no system for enumerating refugees, and they are moving continually.”

Senator Kennedy: You estimate 800,000 refugees in Phnom Penh. What about outside the city? There must be more outside.

Mr. O’Connor. We estimate there are some additional refugees in the province capitals also, Senator. But our real problem here is that the kind of fighting that has been going on in Cambodia has been very fluid, and the families leave their homes, and very often within a week, 2 weeks, or 3 weeks, they move back. So, there is a constant ebb and flow in the movement of people which neither Cambodians nor we are able to keep track of. That is why I think the GAO phrase is quite correct, the total number at any given time is indeed conjectural.

If I may continue, over the 2 years since the war spread to Cambodia, we estimate that the Cambodian Government and private groups have dispensed a minimum of 400 million riels for aid to refugees and the injured. (This is the equivalent of $2.7 million at the current rate of 150:1 and over $7 million at the exchange rate which prevailed until October 1971.) This includes funds expended by the Ministry of Social Action, Labor and Employment; the General Commissariat for Veterans; the Directorate for War Victims; the Khmer Red Cross; and private donations in local currency from religious and charitable groups. We estimate that of this amount over a million dollars can be attributed to expenditures for civilian casualties and victims of the war. In addition, there has been over $4 million worth of donations in kind, as Ambassador Sullivan has said, chiefly medical supplies, from Japan and 13 other countries.

The Directorate for War Victims gives food for 10 days and clothing, if needed, to each refugee after which time he is expected to provide for himself or depend on relatives. The vast majority are said to be self-sufficient within 10 days. If a refugee is sick and unable to work, however, the Directorate continues the food ration. With regard to civilian casualties, the Directorate pays 5 thousand riels lump sum, to a civilian war widow, all of whose children are minors. If any of the children have reached majority, they are expected to provide for the family without assistance from the Directorate. The Directorate pays 2 thousand riels to a civilian or a soldier whose wife is killed by military action and for a child so killed. Fifty-riels per week are paid to the hospital in which a wounded refugee is held and the wounded refugee receives a payment of 1 thousand riels when he leaves the hospital.

In attempting to assess the condition of the refugees and the effectiveness of ongoing programs, our mission had a number of conversations with Phnom Penh with the UNDP (United Nations Development Program), other international agencies, and the Cambodians, in one of which I personally participated in January. As a result, all parties agreed that, because of the paucity of data, a study was needed to determine the conditions and problems encountered by refugees and displaced persons in Phnom Penh, where the largest number of people have gathered. The UNDP agreed to undertake such a study within the context of its ongoing programs and available staff.
This study was completed just a few weeks ago. It produced no evidence that the refugees who are able to live with relatives and friends are in urgent or dire need of assistance. It found that the shift in population has not brought on serious unemployment although it may have lowered per capita income.

Senator Kennedy. Would you make this study available to the committee?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir. We have got it in an unofficial translation. It is a preliminary look by the UNDP within the context of its ongoing program and its available staff. It is still under consideration by the Cambodian Government. I can submit it here for the record with the understanding that it is an unofficial translation from the French, so it may not be totally accurate. [For the complete text, see Appendix I.]

Senator Kennedy. That report is obviously more recent than our GAO report. The GAO report was submitted on February 2. But the GAO states:

Our observations and interviews with numerous refugees living outside of refugee camps generally confirmed that the lack of a sufficient food supply rapidly was becoming a serious problem. All but two of the refugees that we interviewed stated that it was very difficult to obtain sufficient food for their families.

So, the GAO makes a rather serious indictment of the food problem, for example.

And, I see in the Washington Post of April 6: “Refugees from the countryside have streamed in, poor and often pitiful.” The population in Phnom Penh is said to have more than doubled. Survivors still mill around small dispensaries waiting for meager handouts of clothing and other items. Civilian casualties were cited to be in the hundreds.

So, we are most interested in your report, because the descriptions we have read are not as satisfactory as you have mentioned. So, we would be interested in having the UNDP study.

Mr. O'Connor. Senator, if I could speak to the food problem directly, this is an area, of course, that we keep very careful track of in Phnom Penh particularly from the economic point of view, and particularly in terms of rice stocks which have to come down from Battambang.

Today there really have been no shortages of food, Senator, and certainly not of rice in Phnom Penh. And this is an area which we watch very often—actually every day for all these reasons, inflation, and the evidence of need and dislocation.

I am not suggesting for a minute that there may not be some problems in the distribution of those foodstuffs, that there may not be some people in an overcrowded area that are not getting as much as they should. To some extent I suspect that is inevitable, and I don’t want to say that that doesn’t happen. What I can say is that the basic supply of food, to our almost daily observation, and observation of prices, have remained really quite stable over the last 6 months.

Senator Kennedy. Does this study go into the shortages in the provincial areas as well, and what is being done to establish food centers in those areas?
Mr. O'Connor. Primarily this study is centered in Phnom Penh because it was the feeling of virtually all of us there that that was the heart of the refugee problem, and where most of them were located.

Senator Fong. How much control do you have over the refugee relief work in Cambodia?

Mr. O'Connor. What control do we have, sir?

Senator Fong. Yes.

Mr. O'Connor. Basically we do not have any control other than persuasion. The program and the funds that I have recited to you are coming from the Cambodian Government's own budget, and it is managed by their own officials. It is managed in three or four different agencies, and there may be some lack of coordination. Obviously, we do have, Senator, a substantial degree of influence in Phnom Penh on this matter.

Senator Fong. But the direct control comes from the government?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir; it does.

Senator Fong. Is there a feeling there that the U.S. presence should not be felt too much, and that they had better rely on Japan and other countries?

Mr. O'Connor. I think the situation on that is this. There are a number of countries that are helping Cambodia in their war effort, including some Asian nations. But there are a substantial greater number of nations, both in Europe and Asia, that are hesitant to assist in the military effort that are more than interested in assisting in this kind of humanitarian effort. So, I think it is those nations, which include Japan very notably in this particular case, to which the Cambodians have turned, and, it seems to me, quite wisely so.

If I may continue, the UNDP report noted that the influx has, however, put a strain on public facilities in the city. The UNDP therefore recommended intensive efforts by the Cambodian Government to insure that the present water supply system in Phnom Penh is maintained at sufficiently high standards to prevent epidemics and to increase garbage collections as a general preventive health measure. Increased public health surveillance was recommended to guard against outbreaks of plague or cholera. And I might say that there has been no real evidence of the existence of any such plagues. And we want to keep it that way.

With reference to medical services, the UNDP found that, although the quantity of hospital beds in Phnom Penh to treat civilian casualties was found to approach international standards—that is, approximately one bed to 200 population—these facilities are frequently inefficiently utilized. Present stocks of standard medicines are reported to be satisfactory, but more trained physicians and nurses are needed. And I think that is an observation you can make about almost any country in the world. The UNDP advised the Cambodian Government to seek help from appropriate international bodies—such as the World Health Organization and the International Red Cross—or bilateral donors in a nurses’ training program.

To help those who have had to construct makeshift housing in and around Phnom Penh, the UNDP recommended that the Cambodian Government provide assistance with materials for low-cost, self-help type housing and pointed to the possibilities for increased importation of these commodities under the American Aid program.
Senator Kennedy. Just on this point—the adequacy of medical stocks—the GAO study is quite to the contrary. It points out on page 49:

We are advised by the Minster of Public Health and several public health doctors that there is a very serious shortage of all types of pharmaceutical products in Cambodia. ... At one of the public health hospitals we visited in Phnom Penh, we observed an example of the critical need for medicines. The hospital director advised us that, in the preceding two months, they had experienced an alarming mortality rate among small children ... from gastric disorders which, if not treated, would result in death. It could be treated, but no medicines were available. ... The hospital advised us that at the time the mortality rate was about 15 percent.

And on page 51 the GAO says: "Conditions at the hospital were appalling."

That is about the strongest language I have ever read in a GAO report. It goes on to say:

Conditions in the maternity wards were also crowded. Mothers of newborn babies, some less than 12 hours old, were lying on folding cots in the hallways. ... Hospitals were very poorly equipped. The laboratory contained virtually no equipment. ... We observed one ward which contained about 200 patients. The ward consisted of two areas—one was an outside walled area where about 100 patients stayed day and night, (the ground was used for sleeping) and the other was a large room 20 by 80 feet which contained a hundred more patients. ... The room was dark. ... No ventilation.

And they talk about another hospital, the Preah Monivong Hospital—major military hospital, not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Health, and which did not treat civilian war-related casualties.

But, throughout, have rather different conclusions than your report.

Mr. O'Connor. Senator, the GAO report, of course, was filed in February, and I believe they were in the field in September and October. And that is perhaps 8 or 9 months earlier than the UNDP report, which was made about 3 weeks ago. There is an 8 month gap there. I am not suggesting that every hospital and every dispensary is filled with precisely the right amount of medicines. All I am reporting to you, sir—as I pass on the text of the report that the UNDP filed—is that they are talking specifically about Phnom Penh, and I am not talking about the hospital you are talking about, that the GAO refers to. All I am reporting to you is that there are adequate supplies of medicine generally. I did make the point that in all cases the distribution of both food and medicine may not be as good as it should be.

Senator Fong. Mr. O'Connor, what control have you over the hospitals and dispensaries?

Mr. O'Connor. We don't have any control over that, sir. We are in a position to make some supplies available under our program when they are requested. To date they have not been.

Senator Fong. So, you actually have no direct control over anything in Cambodia?

Mr. O'Connor. No; sir.

Senator Fong. All you have is a mission there to advise, is that correct?

Mr. O'Connor. That is right, sir.
Senator Fong. Is that the extent of what our mission can do?

Mr. O'Connor. That is the extent of what our mission can do in these areas, yes; sir.

Senator Fong. In other words, when you see a problem, you advise them as to how it could be improved, but you have no control over the situation?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes; Senator. One of the reasons why we encourage the thought of trying to get an international agency to do this kind of a survey is for the very reason that I mentioned before. There are 13 outside donors or other countries, and Japan, giving aid now in this humanitarian field. And it has seemed to us that in the beginning an effort to internationalize support was justified. We are a very important aspect, but we are not the only unilateral source of all wisdom and supplies.

Senator Fong. The international agencies have gone in there. Are they doing the same thing that you are doing, just advising?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir; that is approximately what they are doing. They have their own Red Cross. And that Red Cross has been in touch with the International Red Cross.

Senator Fong. Do they furnish supplies from time to time?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes; sir. And other nations have been giving humanitarian aid, as I mentioned, in the total amount of about $4 million.

Senator Fong. How do they know what aid to give?

Mr. O'Connor. One of the reasons for this report was to try to ascertain, not just for our purposes, but for the purposes of the international community, if you will, what was needed, what kind of supplies might be needed, and where there were shortages, housing supplies, and the like. And as I note in my report further on down, the Cambodian Government is at this moment reviewing this report and looking at the UNDP recommendations, and will come up, we hope, with their own findings and presumably requests from the international community.

Senator Fong. Is it in connection with these supplies that we find the Cambodian Government is loath to deal with us?

Mr. O'Connor. Is loath to deal with us?

Senator Fong. Yes; that they would rather look to Japan and the other countries.

Mr. O'Connor. I think loathe would be too strong a word. But I think that they do know that there are other donor nations that would prefer to confine their aid to the purely humanitarian area. And it is logical that they should turn to them for this kind of aid.

Senator Fong. Yes; I agree.

Senator Kennedy. The GAO report mentions that the war effort has been the main preoccupation of the Cambodian Government. And because they realize that the United States is the sole source for necessary military assistance, they tend to ask for military aid first. Of course, we willingly give them guns and bombs on a bilateral basis, never worrying about internationalizing that. It is interesting to me that we are always ready to internationalize the programs to look after refugees and civilian war casualties, but we can't do it in terms of military aspects.
Mr. O'CONNOR. There is nothing we would rather see than an internationalization of the Cambodian military effort. Instead, we have seen substantial success in terms of the economic program—they have internationalized that. And I think it is not at all surprising to suggest that Cambodia does set high priority on the war effort.

Senator KENNEDY. Have you, or have any of the representatives of the agencies in Cambodia, had conversations with any Cambodian officials which would indicate that they have a desire for medical supplies.

Mr. O'CONNOR. Have the Cambodians indicated that to any of the agencies over there?

Senator KENNEDY. Well, specifically to Robert Blackburn, who was the second Secretary, on June 1, 1971, in the U.S. Embassy. Did he ever receive a request from a Cambodian official for medical supplies?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Senator, Mr. Blackburn is in the room today. And I think he might be able to clarify that.

Senator KENNEDY. Alright.

Mr. BLACKBURN. On that date a representative from the Ministry of Health, who is the ministry's representative to the Cambodian Red Cross, did come to see me. But he asked specifically if we would facilitate his contact with the American Red Cross, which we did, and sent it to the Department, and asked the Department to inform the American Red Cross that the Cambodian Government was interested in—

Senator KENNEDY. What sort of thing did he want?

Mr. BLACKBURN. He didn't have any specific items in mind. I asked him that.

Senator KENNEDY. Was he looking for television sets, or machine guns, or medical supplies?

Mr. BLACKBURN. He was looking for medical supplies for civilian casualties in civilian hospitals in Phnom Penh.

Senator KENNEDY. And he called on you for help and assistance?

Mr. BLACKBURN. Yes.

Senator KENNEDY. What did you tell him?

Mr. BLACKBURN. I asked him what sort of specific items he had in mind, so that the Red Cross would have some idea of what he wanted. I asked him if he had contacted the International Red Cross, which has a resident representative in Phnom Penh. And I am told there that the International Red Cross Societies are prepared to respond if they feel that the International Red Cross has received such a request or general appeal.

And he said that he had.

But I checked later and found that he had not made a specific request.

I asked him if he had contacted any other agencies to suggest that they make contact with their respective Red Cross societies.

And he said he had not.

And I suggested that he did so.

Senator KENNEDY. Did you ever think that this might be an area where the United States might be more responsive—in trying to help and assist him? Did you ever take the matter up with anyone else in AID, to indicate that a fellow had come to see you and told you there
was a need for medical supplies to look after civilian casualties? Did you ever ask yourself, is there any way we can help him?

Mr. BLACKBURN. Yes. I made a report of this conversation.

Senator Kennedy. Who did you report to?

Mr. BLACKBURN. To the Department of State and the Ambassador.

Senator Kennedy. What did they say?

Mr. BLACKBURN. I simply don't recall whether they did or did not contact the Red Cross. If they did, I have no idea what the Red Cross' response was.

Senator Kennedy. Did you contact them solely for the purpose of trying to get some help from the Red Cross, or did you say, here is a guy from the Cambodian Government that needs some medical supplies to use for civilian casualties, what can we do to help?

Mr. BLACKBURN. I simply reported the conversation.

Senator Kennedy. Did you recommend that he might get help from some of the "socialist" countries?

Mr. BLACKBURN. I suggested that as long as he was making an approach to the American Red Cross, that it would perhaps be useful if he could make an approach to other Red Cross societies. And I specifically mentioned socialist countries and Great Britain and Japan.

Senator Kennedy. Now, at some point after that, I understand a Dr. Pheng Kanthel wrote to the Red Cross in the United States. His description of the hospitals and medical needs of Cambodia, Mr. O'Connor, are substantially those of the GAO report. It is quite different from what your report evidently shows. But even so, here is what your report (the UNDP report) says at the end—which should not be overlooked—that:

medical assistance should absolutely be planned for and provided as these people do not have the means to go elsewhere for medical attention... The furnishing of pharmaceuticals for use in the work of these teams should be effected on a regular and continuous basis.

The tone of this part is somewhat different from the optimistic description you mentioned before.

Mr. O'Connor. Senator, I am not hiding anything. I reviewed the text. And it is not my report, sir, it is the UNDP report.

Senator Kennedy. That's right. We are just trying to get an idea of what the conditions are in these hospitals. We had read the description of the GAO, and we have heard your comments here, and we have read from the UNDP report. We will let the record stand.

In any event, they have hospitals in Phnom Penh—both civilian and Military—that are overcrowded with sick and wounded. "People have fled from the insecure rural areas, taken refuge in the capital, whose population has increased from 600,000 to 2 million."

That is the Cambodian estimate. To quote further:

In the provinces, also, people have flocked into urban areas whose medical facilities are destroyed. We appealed to the Red Cross organizations of friendly countries through the good offices of the CICR. The war is going on, and casualties are increasing steadily, resulting in an alarming, rapid decline of our medical, clothing and food stockpiles, although we did receive a large number of aid from friendly countries. We urge that this organization [the American Red Cross] send us in the shortest possible time such drugs as antibiotics, vitamins, anti-malarial and such medical articles as dressing materials, surgical equipment, clothing and food. We did approach the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, but no response has yet been obtained.
That is Dr. Kanthel writing, who is "Representative, Ministry of Public Health in Khmer Red Cross." The letter is dated August 17, 1971.

And then, tragically, we see a response in February of this year—6 months later—from the American Red Cross. I will make both letters a part of the record. In the response they said: "We have on hand in our warehouse a stock of 6,433 bottles of vitamin tablets called 'Chocks'. The total is about 385,900 tablets." They then indicate they are willing to send those tablets, if they can get clearance through the Cambodian Government, and that was all!

(The letters referred to follow:)

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Pheng Kanthel, Representative, Ministry of Public Health in Khmer Red Cross; Col. William Waugh, Deputy Chief, MEDTC Forward; Robert R. Blackburn, Jr., Second Secretary, U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh.

Pheng Kanthel called for an appointment and upon arrival said he wished to contact the American Red Cross to seek medical equipment and supplies for the civilian casualties in five civilian hospitals in Phnom Penh. I asked if he had requested such assistance through ICRC representative here and he said he had but that only a little aid had been forthcoming. (Comment: Mr. Leonard Isler, ICRC, later confirmed my impression that Pheng Kanthel has not recently made any specific request. Apparently the July 1970, general appeal for aid by the Red Cross constitute "a request"). I asked if he has tried to contact any other Red Cross associations through other embassies here. He said he had not. I asked if he had discussed the problem with the WHO representative whom I understood were in Phnom Penh. He said he had not but that he understood they provided technical assistance rather that the sort of supplies he was interested in. I finally asked if he had any specific items in mind. Pheng Kanthel said he did not and repeated the general need for supplies and equipment.

I said that it would be up to the American Red Cross to decide if they wished to give any assistance and I would inform the Red Cross that Pheng Kanthel was interested in discussing his needs. I noted that there was little possibility of our aid program including the sort of supplies and equipment he was interested in. I said I strongly recommended that he seek assistance through other embassies including those of the Socialist countries as it was clear that he was seeking humanitarian assistance for civilian casualties. I specifically mentioned the Soviet Union, Japan, and Great Britain. During the conversation, Colonel Waugh explained that the assistance in the military field could relieve pressure on the civilian hospitals for medicines and medical equipment, but Pheng Kanthel did not seem interested.

Comment: I have the impression that he has been launched by the Minister, that he hopes the Red Cross will provide everything he needs—even though he has no idea what he needs. I will inform the American Red Cross that there is this interest but I do not recommend that we take any further action.

Mr. Samuel Krakow,
Director International Services

Dear Mr. Krakow: We thank you for your letter of 10th April 1968 in which you told us about the American Red Cross willingness to offer our Organization a humanitarian aid consisting in medicine and other medical supplies. This aid was deeply appreciated by our management board and enabled us to engage in various humanitarian activities for the benefit of our people. When we met in Vienna at the time of the International Conference an encounter which will always remain vivid in my memory. I was able to realize how devoted you were to the cause of the American PoWs in the hands of Vietnamese communists. Despite all interventions and those, equally numerous of Mr. Andre Durand the then Delegate General for Asia who is a personal friend of mine, we did not
manage to convince our enemies who refused to comply with stipulations of the Geneva Convention. This was in our eye a moral disaster. Furthermore we were penalized so to speak by the communists who labelled us as pro-American. That obliged us to temporarily withdraw from the Organization. Such was our lot following the Vienna International Conference.

Since 18th March 1970 date of Prince SIHANOUK's legal restitution communists aggression against Cambodia generated serious medico-sanitary problems. Hospitals of Phnom Penh both civilian and military are over crowded with the sick and wounded. People have fled from insecure rural areas taken refuge in the capital whose population has increased from 600,000 to 2 millions. In the provinces also people have flocked in urban areas whose medical facilities are destroyed by the aggressors either kill or wound the medical staff and the civilians population. We have appealed to Red Cross Organizations of friendly countries through the good offices of the CICR. The war is going on casualties are increasing steadily resulting in an alarming rapid decline of our medical, clothing and food stockpiles although we did receive a large number of aids from friendly countries.

Confronted with this grave situation, I am taking the liberty here to request you kindly to approach the American Red Cross and urge this Organization to send us in the shortest possible time such drugs as antibiotics, vitamins, antimalaria etc., and such medical articles as dressing materials, surgery equipment, clothing and food. The delivery of these items will best be made at the Phnom Penh river port. We sincerely hope your friendly and urgent intervention with American Red Cross will help us assume our responsibilities. We did approach the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh but no response has yet been obtained.

With the anticipated thanks of the Khmer people to the American people and Red Cross, I am, Mr. Krakow.

Yours very sincerely,

Dr. PHENG KANTHEI
Representative Ministry of Public Health in Khmer Red Cross.


Dr. PHENG KANTHEI,
Representative Ministry of Public Health in Khmer Red Cross,
Phnom Penh, Khmer.

Dear Dr. KANTHEI: For a variety of reasons, I have been greatly remiss in my correspondence with you, but I think you should know that we have had many meetings on the subject of our continued relationships with your Society. We are quite aware of the problems you are facing, and particularly those affecting refugees in your country, and you are undoubtedly well aware of the considerable interest in their welfare which has been the subject of both public and congressional inquiries. I have seen the report of a recent government survey on this subject, and I am under the impression that both the United Nations Developmental Program and the International Committee of the Red Cross are also conducting surveys on the refugee situation.

The purpose of this letter really is to assure you of our continued concern and to repeat our willingness to try to provide certain medical and other supplies to assist you in your program efforts.

We have on hand in our warehouse a stock of 6,483 bottles of vitamin tablets called "CHOCKS". The total is about 863,800 tablets. Before these can be shipped to Khmer, we must have your Society's acceptance of the shipment, with a statement regarding duty-free entry. If you feel these vitamins would be of use to your medical program, please let us know. Upon receipt of the above-mentioned statement, we will arrange for the prompt shipment of these supplies to your Society.

Kindest personal regards.

Sincerely,

SAMUEL KRAKOW.

(Subsequent to the hearing, the following letter was submitted:)

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Hon. Edward M. Kennedy,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, Committee on the Judiciary,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As suggested during the May 9 hearings of your Subcommittee, I am writing to clarify the record concerning actions taken by the Department of State pursuant to discussions held on June 2, 1971 at Phnom Penh between Mr. Pheng Kanthel, of the Ministry of Public Health of the Khmer Republic, and Robert Blackburn, Jr., then a Second Secretary at the American Embassy in Phnom Penh.

The request made by Mr. Pheng during the discussion, as Mr. Blackburn reported in a memorandum of conversation, was that the Embassy help facilitate communications between his Ministry and the American Red Cross (ARC). Mr. Blackburn suggested to Mr. Pheng that such contact would appropriately be made through the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) resident at Phnom Penh. Nonetheless, Mr. Blackburn the same day initiated a telegram to the Department of State reporting a resume of the conversation and Mr. Pheng's request. On June 8, 1971, Embassy Phnom Penh was advised by cable from the State Department that the ARC had been informed of Mr. Pheng's request and that the ARC recommended that Mr. Pheng work through the ICRC.

During subsequent discussions between an officer of the Department and Mr. Samuel Krakow, Director of The Office of International Services, ARC, we learned that Mr. Pheng had written to Mr. Krakow on August 17, 1971 requesting ARC assistance for Cambodia. The letter was delivered to the ARC by the Khmer Washington Embassy and neither our Embassy at Phnom Penh nor the Department had knowledge of it before it was mentioned by Mr. Krakow. Mr. Krakow said the ARC had the request under active consideration and was checking with American pharmaceutical firms to determine whether "presentation" medicines might be available for Cambodia. At the same time, however, Mr. Krakow said the letter from Mr. Pheng was non-specific in detail and gave no description of the problems in Cambodia nor of the magnitude of need.

The Departmental officer suggested the ARC might undertake a survey in Cambodia to clarify areas of specific need, and Mr. Krakow was receptive to this idea, as was ARC President George M. Elsey when I personally discussed this matter with him on the telephone last fall. At about this time, however, we learned that the UNDP at Phnom Penh was planning to undertake the survey described during the hearings May 9 and so advised the ARC, which decided to hold its Cambodian plans in abeyance pending the completion of the UNDP survey.

We have sent a copy of the UNDP survey to the ARC and are advised that it will be studied to determine areas for possible action by the ARC.

I hope this information will clarify the record.

Sincerely yours,

Roderto L. O'Connor.

Senator Kennedy. Somebody is giving a brushoff to a desperate plea for medical supplies, and I think it is outrageous, absolutely outrageous.

Contact was made with our Embassy requesting medical supplies —whether through the Red Cross or whatever—and the need was made known, but there was a complete failure to follow up on that request. I find that shocking!

Mr. O'Connor, I don't know what the state of the record is in terms of going through the American Red Cross. You have one report, and Mr. Blackburn gave you a different version of the same report.

Senator Kennedy. Well, tell us what was done by way of followup. Is that the way the Department of State does things: when someone comes to you and talks about the tragic need for medical supplies, you
simply write a memo without any kind of followup? Do you just let it go and file it upstairs, and that is the end of it?

Mr. O'CONNOR. That report did not come to me.

Senator KENNEDY. Mr. Blackburn is here—can you tell me what followup was made? I understand you told the Ambassador, and you also told the State Department. We have representatives of the State Department here this morning. I want to know what followup took place.

Mr. BLACKBURN. Perhaps they can speak as to their end. I was in Phnom Penh. I don't know.

Senator KENNEDY. Who can give this information to us?

Mr. SULLIVAN. We have our Cambodian desk officer here.

Senator KENNEDY. While he is on his way up, I would like to read from yesterday's Washington Post:

Among the "essential items" approved by AID to underwrite Cambodia's economic survival last year were 1,700 Italian motor scooters, valued at $660,000, more than $100,000 worth of color movie film, and other professional movie equipment.

Will you tell me why the scooters got in and medical supplies did not?

Mr. O'CONNOR. I read that article, and I read those specific items. And I can assure you that all the three articles you refer to there were in no sense authorized, or paid for by AID. Those same three items have appeared in newspaper articles for some time. And there is no truth in that, sir.

Senator FONG. You mean you dispute the Washington Post?

Mr. O'CONNOR. I am afraid I do, sir.

Senator FONG. That is sacrilegious.

Senator KENNEDY. I want to find out what happens in a case where a representative of the Cambodian Government comes in and asks for some help or assistance. The Embassy indicates that it thinks the best route is through the American Red Cross. We know he was steered to other sources—other countries. I want to hear what happened to his request, and why we didn't respond.

Mr. CORCORAN. We received this request in order to pass it onto the American Red Cross, and we did pass it on to the Red Cross.

Senator KENNEDY. Continue.

Mr. CORCORAN. We have heard no more about it.

Senator KENNEDY. Do you follow it up at all? Do you just pass the buck? Is there any humanitarian aid in the budget?

[Long silence.]

Mr. O'CONNOR. Senator, as I pointed out in my statement, a good deal of our AID program generates local currency. And that local currency is available to the Khmers to put in their budget in any way they wish. So, in that respect any kind of humanitarian assistance they feel that they need and fund out of their own budget is made available to them out of the counterpart funds from our overall AID program.

In addition to that, of course, a good many of the items that come through our commodity import program are for civilians—if not medicines. We have stayed away from them through a long history of having difficulty with the efficient distribution of pharmaceuticals—
although they do contribute to their standard of living, particularly in the cities.

Now, there is no question, sir, as I said in my statement, at the end of it—I have not had a chance to read it—that we are watching what is happening in this area, and we are looking at the food supplies, the medical supplies. The WHO is in that area now in Phnom Penh—

Senator Kennedy. Before leaving this—and then we will let you continue—I just want you to know my deep sense of frustration over this. I simply can’t understand how a request of this sort—for needed medical supplies for refugees and victims of a war which we help fuel—how you can allow such a request to be handled in this fashion.

You have a person who bucks it to the Ambassador, who bucks it back to the State Department, which bucks it over to the Red Cross. If that request had been for military aid—for guns or air support—how many hours do you think it would take for us to respond? How quickly are those requests treated when they are bucked back to the Pentagon? Our Government seems conditioned to respond efficiently when guns or ammunition are needed, but when civilians need medicine we buck the request all over Washington.

Speaking for myself, I think this is enormously distressing.

Mr. O'Connor. Senator, I share your concern. And I am not the least bit happy to sit here and relate these delays. One answer is that we did followup with the Red Cross, and we spent a good deal of time there. But I am not happy with the results.

Senator Fong. Did you say you had counterpart funds in Cambodia?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir. Our commodity import program, dollars spent in the United States for essential items, not Italian motor scooters—

Senator Fong. How much in counterpart funds do you have?

Mr. O'Connor. We get counterpart funds in the amount of imports that actually come into that country. And I think that total is now over $30 million.

Senator Fong. Did you say that the Cambodian Government knows that if it needs anything it can use those funds?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes. The Cambodian Government has two sources of funds, particularly counterpart funds on the one hand, from our commodity imports, and foreign exchange from an economic stabilization fund. That fund in total is $34.5 million. It came from various donors, including the Khmers themselves. So, they had these two sources of additional revenues out of the AID program of ourselves and other nations that is available to them for any one of these supplies. One of the reasons why that fund was necessary was to allow them with that kind of foreign exchange to buy, for example, pharmaceuticals.

Senator Fong. So, they could have bought the pharmaceuticals that this man was asking from the Red Cross with these counterpart funds?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir; or they could have gotten it from the Red Cross or through other channels.

I will say that I am unhappy that we didn’t follow it up.

Senator Fong. If they had gotten it from the Red Cross it would save part of that $34 million?
Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir; it would.

Senator Fong. And, if they had really wanted certain pharmaceuticals they could have gotten them with the $34 million from the International Red Cross, or from other agencies or countries?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir.

Senator Fong. How much are we talking about?

Mr. O'Connor. You mean the total need?

Senator Fong. No; I mean what was requested from the Red Cross?

Mr. O'Connor. Actually it wasn't quantified in terms of money, Senator.

Senator Fong. You said they needed a certain amount of bandages and things like that?

Mr. O'Connor. It wasn't quantified.

Senator Fong. It wasn't quantified?

Mr. O'Connor. No. Unfortunately we have this problem very often with Khmer officials. They make a very general statement of need, and they don't give very much to put your teeth into.

Senator Fong. If the man really knew what was going on, he could have gotten the money that was needed from the counterpart funds to buy these things?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes. And that is one of the reasons why we asked the UNDP team, and, now, the WHO team that was in there to take a look at that situation, so that we and the international community can begin to get a handle on just exactly what they did.

Senator Fong. So, if this were really needed, it was not denied them by the U. S. Government because the United States had already told the Cambodian Government that it could use the counterpart funds for this purpose?

Mr. O'Connor. Yes, sir.

Senator Kennedy. Please tell me how you can buy American pharmaceuticals with local counterpart funds.

Mr. O'Connor. Senator, although legally we can buy American pharmaceuticals, as a matter of policy over the years - we have had so much difficulty with them because, as you know, they are very high priced and very hard to handle, that we have tried to stay away from using that in our commodity import funds.

Now, with the counterpart funds, or with this free foreign exchange available to them, they can indeed, and I am sure they do, buy substantial quantities of pharmaceuticals. We may have that figure.

There is, Senator, a company there that does produce, and is increasing that production right now, of pharmaceuticals that can be bought with local currency out of the counterpart funds.

Senator Kennedy. What about American or Japanese pharmaceuticals? It is my understanding that you can't buy American pharmaceuticals with counterpart funds, and you can't buy Japanese pharmaceuticals.

Mr. O'Connor. No, sir, you can't. You can buy them with the free exchange which comes through the stabilization fund.

Senator Kennedy. What percentage of that fund is used for medical supplies as opposed to military supplies?

Let's read your budget presentation for last year. It refers to the economic assistance to finance petroleum products, transportation and
spare parts—local currency generated by U.S. financed imports will be used by the Cambodian Government for the purpose of its budget, the military element all of which is for military equipment.

Can you tell us what percentage is used now for medical supplies and what for humanitarian purposes?

Mr. O’Connor. I am sure we can supply that for the record. I am not sure we have it here with us.

(Subsequent to the hearing, the following information was submitted:)

CAMBODIAN IMPORTS OF PHARMACEUTICALS

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Senator Kennedy. This is a hearing on refugees. You ought to be able to tell us what part of the Cambodian Government budget is being used for refugee plus humanitarian programs.

Mr. O’Connor. It is a question of looking back at their imports over the past years.

Senator Kennedy. We are talking about Cambodian refugees. That is the purpose of this hearing. I think a reasonable question would be, what part of the Cambodian budget is being spent on refugees.

Mr. O’Connor. I gave you those figures. I thought you were asking me specifically about pharmaceuticals. The amount spent by the Cambodian Government I gave you, out of four different agencies.

Senator Kennedy. But you can’t tell us what part of their budget, or of the counterpart funds, is being used for refugee work, or for pharmaceuticals or medical supplies? Because we know none of the other money is being spent for it, don’t we?

Mr. O’Connor. I am not quite sure what you mean by the other money. It could be foreign exchange from the exchange support funds, of which they did have over $34 million when it was set up. They could be spent for pharmaceutical supplies, and medicines coming in from foreign countries. I will try to get a breakout, sir, of their budget, how much is spent on pharmaceuticals or medical supplies.

Could I add, the WHO group there reports to us that the treatment of civilian war casualties—first of all; they talked about the number of beds, as I mentioned in my statement, it is under international standards. And they say the trouble is in management; they are often not coordinated well. And WHO then goes on to find that the treatment of civilian war casualties, as I say, suffers from the same defect as Cambodian medical services in general. Although there are sufficient numbers of doctors, supplies, and equipment, the administration of the facilities is inadequate, so that casualty care takes longer, and is lower in quality than it should be.

There is a WHO team in Phnom Penh, and this problem is one of their top priorities. I am hopeful that this will give some improvement in the coordination of the use of these facilities.

Senator Kennedy. What sort of items—as raised by this Washington Post article—what sort of things are being imported through AID as “essential items?”