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NODIS/CHEROKEE



E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, CB
SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN SETTLEMENT

REFERENCES: (A) STATE 269721 (?) PARIS 2857

1. MOST DISAPPOINTING ASPECT TO ME OF REFTEL (A) IS THAT WE ARE APPARENTLY DETERMINED TO POSTPONE FURTHER EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION UNTIL AFTER DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN HAS ENDED AND CONGRESS HAS ACTED ON SUPPLEMENTAL.

2. IN THE FIRST PLACE, SITUATION IN CAMBODIA MAY NOT HOLD TOGETHER THAT LONG. EVEN IF IT DOES, AND WE SURVIVE DRY SEASON, AND CONGRESS ACTS FAVORABLY, WE WILL BE IN NO STRONGER POSITION TO OBTAIN AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT THAN WE ARE TODAY, AND VERY LIKELY WE WILL BE IN A MUCH WEAKER POSITION. TO BE BLUNT, WE ARE WASTING TIME. IN MY MAJOR ASSESSMENT LAST JUNE I MADE CLEAR THAT TIME WAS WORKING AGAINST US. IN SEPTEMBER I THOUGHT I HAD CONVINCED EVERYONE CONCERNED THAT WE WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE IN A STRONGER POSITION THAN WE WERE THEN, AND IT WOULD ALL BE DOWNHILL THEREAFTER. NOW IT IS FEBRUARY AND THESE PREDICTIONS HAVE BEEN BORNE OUT BY EVENTS.

3. SIHANOUK HAS MADE HIS POSITION CLEAR, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, THAT HE BELIEVES THE SOLUTION TO THE CAMBODIAN PROBLEM LIES IN WASHINGTON. HE HAS SAID HE WANTS TO TALK TO THE AMERICANS. HE DOES NOT WANT TO

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TALK TO LON NOL OR TO INTERMEDIARIES. REFTEL (B) REPORTING BUFFUM'S TALK WITH HIBOW REITERATES THAT SIHANOUK WANTS TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE US ON WORKING OUT A PEACE SETTLEMENT, AND THAT HIS ONLY CONDITION REMAINS THE REMOVAL OF LON NOL (WHICH, I BELIEVE, WE ALL AGREE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM). WE HAVE LEARNED FROM A CLANDESTINE SOURCE IN PHNOM PENH THAT SIHANOUK STATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE (ALTHOUGH NOT WITH LON NOL) IN THE COURSE OF AN INTERVIEW WITH A POLISH JOURNALIST IN PEKING ON JANUARY 7. REPORTS OF THIS KIND REACH US VIA MANY CHANNELS, SO THERE MUST BE STRONG FOUNDATION TO THE IDEA THAT SIHANOUK BELIEVES HIS OWN POSITION IS DETERIORATING AND WANTS TO SALVAGE SOMETHING BEFORE THE COMMUNISTS WIN A TOTAL VICTORY. THAT GIVES SIHANOUK AND THE USG A VERY SOUND BASIS FOR WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND A COMPROMISE CONTROLLED SOLUTION AT LEAST PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY TO BOTH.



4. REFTEL (A) INDICATES THAT SIHANOUK MAY NOT BE ABLE TO OBTAIN THE CONCURRENCE OF HIS KHMER ROUGE COLLEAGUES IN THE GRUNK/FUNK. IF THIS IS THE CASE THEN HE MAY BE ABLE TO WEAN SIHANOUK AWAY FROM THE KHMER ROUGE BY OFFERING A COMPROMISE THAT LEAVES OUT LON NOL AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES BUT THAT FORGES A NEW AND STRONGER NATIONAL GROUPING OF SIHANOUKIST AND REPUBLICAN ELEMENTS IN SOME SORT OF COALITION. IN ANY CASE, IF WE COULD WEAN SIHANOUK AWAY FROM THE KHMER ROUGE IT WOULD BE A BRAND NEW BALL GAME IN CAMBODIA.

5. I WISH TO URGE IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE US TO UNDERTAKE IMMEDIATE DIRECT CONTACT WITH SIHANOUK TO SEE IF THAT AVENUE WILL OPEN THE WAY FOR THE EARLY COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT WE ARE SEEKING FOR CAMBODIA. IF IT FAILS, WE WILL HAVE LOST NOTHING. BUT IF HE DECLINE TO MAKE THE EFFORT NOW WE ARE WASTING PRECIOUS TIME, AND I AM AFRAID THAT WE HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME LEFT IN CAMBODIA.

6. I THEREFORE URGE THAT WE DO NOT WAIT UNTIL SIHANOUK GOES TO FRANCE ON A PRIVATE VISIT, WHICH MAY BE WEEKS OR MONTHS AWAY, BUT INFORM HIM NOW REPEAT NOW THAT WE,

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THE AMERICANS, ARE WILLING TO ENTER INTO A DIALOGUE WITH HIM IN PEKING OR ANY OTHER PLACE OF HIS CHOOSING.

7. I THINK WE HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION AS AMERICANS TO HELP WORK OUT A CONTROLLED SOLUTION TO THE CAMBODIAN DRAMA. THIS HAS BEEN THE THRUST OF ALL OF MY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPT OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS. THE DEPT'S MESSAGE (REF A) DOES NOT ADDRESS ITSELF TO THIS CARDINAL POINT.

8. WHEN AN AMBASSADOR IS AT ODDS WITH THE POLICY PURSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT, IT IS CUSTOMARY UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR HIM TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION. THESE ARE NOT NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND SUCH AN ACT MIGHT BE MISINTERPRETED AS A DESIRE ON MY PART TO GET OUT. AS A DISCIPLINED FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER I WILL THEREFORE DESIST FROM SUCH ACTION AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER I DO WANT TO REGISTER MY PROFOUND DISAGREEMENT WITH WHAT APPEARS TO ME TO BE DEPT'S REASONING, I.E. THAT WE WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION FOR NEGOTIATIONS SOME MONTHS FROM NOW OR THAT DEVELOPMENTS WILL HAVE OCCURRED IN THE US OR IN CAMBODIA WHICH WILL SHED A KINDER LIGHT ON OUR FIVE YEAR EFFORT IN CAMBODIA.

9. REQUEST EARLY REPLY TO MY SUGGESTION IN PARA 6 AS WELL AS CLEAR GUIDANCE ON WHAT ACTION DEPT IS CONTEMPLATING TO BRING ABOUT AN EARLY CONTROLLED SOLUTION TO CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. I WOULD LIKE TO HELP IN ANY WAY I CAN TO CARRY OUT THE DEPT'S POLICY BUT IN ORDER TO DO SO, I NEED TO KNOW WHAT THAT POLICY IS.
DEAN

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