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FROM: PHNOM PENH

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 875, MAY 18, 6 PM

PRIORITY

ACTION DEPARTMENT 875, SAIGON 510, INFORMATION BANGKOK 491  
CINCPAC 416

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

LOCAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST USE OF "NOXIOUS CHEMICALS" IN SVN (EMB A-449) HAS TAKEN SUDDEN LEAP FORWARD WITH EMERGENCE WIDESPREAD RUMORS THAT CAMBODIAN FOOD SUPPLIES AFFECTED. MINISTRY AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS SCHEDULED ACCOMPANY USAID COUNTERPARTS TO BORDER PROVINCE OF SVAY RIENG YESTERDAY CALLED OFF TRIP ON GROUNDS FOOD GROWN IN PROVINCE SERIOUSLY CONTAMINATED BY DEFOLIANT SPRAY DRIFTING ACROSS BORDER AND FOOD IMPORTS FROM SVN DANGEROUS. MINAG OFFICIAL MADE POINT SIHANOUK SCHEDULED VISIT SVAY RIENG NEXT WEEK. SIMILAR STORY RE CONTAMINATED FOOD ALSO PASSED USAID OFFICIALS BY PROVINCIAL AGRICULTURE CHIEF PREY VENG, WHO SAID CROPS IN HIS PROVINCE PARTIALLY AFFECTED. CONCURRENTLY, SERVANTS OF US OFFICIALS IN PHNOM PENH HAVE REPORTED CENTRAL MARKET RIFE WITH GOSSIP THAT FOOD ON SALE THERE UNSAFE FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION, ALTHOUGH SUCH GOSSIP THUS FAR NOT LINKED WITH DEFOLIANT CHARGES.

IN LIGHT FOREGOING, AND PARTICULARLY POSSIBILITY SIHANOUK'S VISIT TO SVAY RIENG MAY TRIGGER BLAST AGAINST GVN AND US FOR USE OF "DANGEROUS" CHEMICALS, WE ARE SENDING NOTE TO FOREIGN OFFICE CITING AIDE-MEMOIRE DELIVERED JANUARY 15, 1962 (EMB A-180, JANUARY 18, 1962)

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AND RECALLING THAT INFORMATION RE DEFOLIANTS, WHICH STILL VALID, PASSED DIRECTLY TO SIHANOUK AT THAT TIME BY THEN AMBASSADOR TRIMBLE. NOTE WILL ADD THAT USAID DIRECTOR CAMPAIGNE WILL SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH MINAG CHAU SONG SOONEST TO OFFER SERVICES USAID TECHNICIANS TO ASSIST IN LABORATORY ANALYSES OF ALLEGEDLY CONTAMINATED FOOD. FURTHERMORE, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH MINAG OFFICIALS, USAID TECHNICIANS WILL REFER TO NUMEROUS WARNINGS PASSED MINAG ORALLY AND IN WRITING ABOUT DANGER OF INDISCRIMINATE USE OF INSECTICIDES BY CAMBODIAN FARMERS. WE WOULD LIKE BE ABLE SPECIFICALLY REPEAT ASSURANCES CONTAINED IN JANUARY 15, 1962 AIDE-MEMOIRE THAT HERBICIDES BEING USED IN SUCH MANNER AND AT SUCH DISTANCE FROM FRONTIER AS TO ENSURE THAT THEY DO NOT ENTER CAMBODIA.

BECAUSE FONOFF TIGHTLY CLOSED OVER WEEKEND, WE ARE DELIVERING NOTE EARLY MONDAY MORNING. IN CONNECTION LAST POINT PRECEDING PARAGRAPH, SAIGON REQUESTED URGENTLY PROVIDE ANY AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON PROXIMITY DEFOLIANT OPERATIONS TO CAMBODIAN BORDER.

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