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PEACE AND NEUTRALITY IS CAMBODIA'S GOAL

By Nong Kimny
Cambodian Ambassador to India and former
Deputy Foreign Minister of Cambodia

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SUMMARY: In a May 25 address to the Indian Council of World Affairs, Ambassador Nong Kimny affirmed Cambodia's desire for peace and neutrality and showed how North Vietnamese and Viet Cong violations of that neutrality culminated in open aggression on March 27. Attached are excerpts from the address.

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PEACE AND NEUTRALITY IS CAMBODIA'S GOAL

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(The following has been excerpted from Ambassador Nong Kimny's May 25 address to the Indian Council of World Affairs in New Delhi.)

Cambodia was declared a neutral nation in the Geneva Agreement of 1954 which ended the first Indochina war -- an agreement signed by North Vietnam.

Moreover, a national law, voted by our Parliament in 1957, declares that: "Cambodia is a neutral country"; that "it abstains from any alliance -- military or ideological -- with foreign countries," and that "in case it should be victim of a foreign aggression, it reserves the right to defend itself, to appeal to the United Nations, or to appeal to a friendly power."

It was this status of neutrality, first accepted under the guarantee of an international agreement and later proclaimed by a national law, that helped us to keep out of the war in Vietnam for almost 16 years.

However, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong have not respected that neutrality -- first installing their military sanctuaries in Cambodia five years ago and then, in April 1970, launching an open aggression against it.

Over the past five years, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong have secretly set up military sanctuaries along the 600-mile (960-kilometer)

long border between Cambodia and South Vietnam. These sanctuaries contained major base camps, training and regroupment centers, hospitals, logistic facilities, communications networks, arms and ammunition depots, and headquarters of the Central Committee which originates the orders and instructions for military operations and subversive campaigns in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

What started a few years ago as temporary sanctuaries to which the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces used to retreat to escape the battle in South Vietnam, became, little by little, under the cover of secrecy, a veritable military occupation of Cambodian territory by more than 40,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops.

At the time of the legal deposition of Prince Sihanouk, former Head of State, on March 18, 1970, these 40,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops controlled the entire strip of Cambodia's eastern border with South Vietnam. This massive occupation by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops of Cambodian territory was a clear violation both of the sovereignty of Cambodia and of the Geneva Agreement of 1954.

Faced with this violation, the Cambodian Government used all diplomatic and political means to secure the withdrawal of these foreign forces through a peaceful settlement, on the basis of non-interference and mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other's nation.

But the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (representing the Viet Cong) not only refused to settle the problem peacefully with us but decided --

in the space of about two weeks -- to unleash their forces to start an open and brutal aggression against Cambodia.

A short chronological summary of the events of the second half of March 1970 clearly shows that North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, while occupying the frontier regions of Cambodia, had their plans ready to launch an aggression at the first opportunity.

On March 12, the Cambodian Government demanded that North Vietnam and the Viet Cong evacuate their troops from Cambodia. Two days later, as a gesture of good will and to show its desire for a peaceful settlement, the Cambodian Government proposed the holding of roundtable tripartite talks between Cambodia, North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam agreed to be present at the talks. Consequently, two meetings were held on March 16th and 17th in Phnom Penh.

But it was clear from the start that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong representatives did not want to enter into meaningful talks, and on March 25, in spite of a renewed appeal by the Cambodian Government to continue the negotiations, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong declared that they had decided to recall their ambassadors and diplomatic staff and to "suspend" their diplomatic relations with Cambodia. On March 27, the North Vietnam and Viet Cong ambassadors and their diplomatic personnel left Phnom Penh by plane for Hanoi and their embassies were closed.

The same day, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces started their first military operations: an attack on a Cambodian unit at Prek Chrieu, district of Snuol, in Kratie province; the occupation of Svay Andong in Prey Veng province by 3,000 Viet Cong troops; a movement of Viet Cong troops at TUK Meas in Kampot province.

It was evident that, as soon as they were asked to stop their violation of Cambodian territory, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong simply came out of their sanctuaries along the border and started their open aggression.

By early May, we had lost more than 4,000 dead, wounded or missing. Thousands of houses were destroyed, roads, buildings, schools, hospitals were ruined, and the whole economy of the country was disrupted. Our 35,000-man army was not prepared for such a brutal and unexpected aggression, although it resisted everywhere with determination.

Cambodia, whose only desire is to live in peace, independence and strict neutrality, was the victim of an open aggression by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops. It would be difficult to imagine a clearer violation of the provisions inscribed in the Geneva Agreement of 1954 and in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as of other specific international obligations concerning the respect of the territory of other countries.

The violation of international agreements, to which Hanoi itself has subscribed, constitutes a problem which concerns not only the parties to these accords, but also the world community. The North

Vietnamese and Viet Cong aggression poses a danger to peace and security in Cambodia and in all Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, even while fighting a war which it does not want, a war which is forced on it, Cambodia still proclaims her desire for peace and strict neutrality. When and if peace comes back to our country, our objective will still be the same -- to remain neutral. We shall do what we can to preserve that neutrality because we are convinced that the neutrality of Cambodia -- necessitated so to say by history and geography -- will constitute a factor for peace not only in Southeast Asia but in all Asia and perhaps the world.

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