

EMBASSY OF THE KHMER REPUBLIC
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PRESS RELEASE

OPEN LETTER TO THE CONGRESS AND PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES

FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KHMER REPUBLIC

4/15/73

The Congress has expressed its will that American tactical air support for our country should cease today. President Nixon has complied with the expression of that will, and issued orders for American military operations there to cease.

The Khmer Republic maintains friendly relations with all countries without discrimination of ideology or system of government. Khmer friendship is founded on the principle of reciprocity and Khmer foreign policy guided by the ideals of peace, independence, sovereignty and neutrality.

Unfortunately, during the last years of his power, Prince Sihanouk betrayed the Khmer people by authorizing the North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops to use our country as a staging ground for attacking South Vietnam.

In March 1970, through popular demonstrations, the Khmer people firmly expressed their sovereign will to see their country free of all North Vietnamese and Vietcong foreign aggressors, who not only invaded their land with the complicity of Prince Sihanouk, but continued to use their territory for aggression against South Vietnam, thus violating their independence and neutrality as well.

After the legal deposal of Prince Sihanouk by the Khmer Parliament, with a small army of some 30,000 men we might still have acquiesced in Communist North Vietnamese wishes and allowed large portions of our territory to be used once again by their troops as a

staging ground for aggression against South Vietnam.

Our country did not do this, and in the process has suffered a savage aggression. Thus we chose to struggle to have our independence, our sovereignty, our territorial integrity and our neutrality respected. We then appealed to all nations to come to our aid to liberate our territory from the foreign invasion. We are grateful that the United States has, in firm manner, replied favorably to our appeal.

By our participation in the struggle against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong aggression forces, we have occupied the attention of many of their troops. As such, we believe we have enormously lessened the burden on American and South Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam and contributed to saving the lives of many American soldiers.

We believed that the United States would recognize its moral obligation toward us for having cast our lot with you, even though there does not exist any formal treaty commitment between our two countries. We believed that, as President Kennedy said in his inaugural address of 1961, the United States would "bear any burden" to help us in the defense of our liberties. We believed we could count upon the United States.

Now the United States has taken its most direct and effective support from us. We are confident that our people will continue to fight for the independence of our nation. The American Congress and People should remember that it took many years to properly train and equip the South Vietnamese to fight for their independence. The people of Cambodia, now struggling for their survival, ask only for

more time so that they too can one day stand on their own. We do, indeed, appreciate very much the help already given and the assistance promised to us. We need continued military, economic, political and humanitarian assistance from the United States. If the Khmer Republic is conquered, its fall will have far-ranging repercussions for Southeast Asia, America and the entire world.

After the halt of american tactical air support, the Khmer people always remain determined to multiply their efforts in their struggle against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong invaders to safeguard their independence, liberty and national sovereignty. Through this courageous fight, they will contribute to the reestablishment of peace in Southeast Asia.

We ask, then, for ongoing assistance from you, the Congress and People of the United States. For if the United States grows weary of aiding its friends and abandons them, even though they are willing to fight and to continue fighting as long as humanly possible in the defense of their freedom and the freedom of the world, your great country will someday find itself alone.

Phnom Penh
August 15, 1973

(For release 11:00 AM, Tuesday, August 21)