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Congressional Record Aid to Cambodia

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Oregon has been one of the leaders in bringing to the hearts and minds of the American people the situation as it actually existed and as it now exists in all of Southeast Asia.

There have been references to the fact that we have a commitment in Cambodia. Frankly, I know of no such commitment, though I think our moral com-
I think, Mr. President, if there is going to be peace in Cambodia that it is going to be through negotiations of some kind or other outside of the present Phnom Penh government. It will not be a case of negotiating from strength—how often we have heard that expression in relation to Indochina. There is little strength there except the weapons and supplies that we send the Phnom Penh government.

The Soviet Union, the Chinese, and the North Vietnamese also supply the rebels. There has been some talk about the amount of military assistance furnished by the various outsiders. There is no question but that large amounts of material assistance have been sent into Cambodia by the four countries which I have mentioned. There is no question but that sizable stocks of American arms and ammunition have been captured by the dissidents, the rebel Cambodians, as was the case in South Vietnam during the course of operations there; and, maybe still is. In the circumstances the fight is likely to go on, the blood will be let, the agony will continue, the number of refugees will increase, and peace will remain a distant mirage.

As I have said, Mr. President, the Soviet Union, the Chinese, the North Vietnamese, and the United States have furnished arms and war material to the elements concerned, and I have in my hand a United Press item dated the 6th of March which reads as follows:

The Pentagon said today Communist rebels in Cambodia have captured 30 to 40 American-made artillery pieces which are accurate enough to close the Phnom Penh airport if the insurgents can get close.

There is more to it, and I will ask that the article be printed at this point in the Record.

There being no objection, the United Press item was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

The Pentagon said today Communist rebels in Cambodia have captured 30 to 40 American-made artillery pieces which are accurate enough to close the Phnom Penh airport if the insurgents can get close.

But Army Maj. Gen. Winant Sidle, an artillery expert, said past operations have shown the Khmer Rouge rebels to be poor marksmen with artillery, and he said only half of the 155 pieces—captured over a 5-year period—are estimated to be operational.

Mr. MANSFIELD. What I am getting at is that these weapons from abroad are helping to kill Cambodians, mostly women and children, and prolonging the agony. I would hope that we would break up the reality of the situation and what I think is the feeling of the American people and Congress. We should test our intelligence rather than talk about a test of our will in which the real sufferers physically, mentally and otherwise are the poor people of Cambodia.

Let the leaders leave, and I believe that peace negotiations can follow. Let us see if some way cannot be found to enter in to negotiations with Prince Norodom Sihanouk. He is writing letters, cables, and telegrams to a lot of people indicating that he is willing. In this he has the concurrence of the premier of the rebel movement Khieu Samphon, who is also the leader of the forces in the field. Let us get away from the rhetoric which has become outworn, and which is no longer relevant. Let us recognize that this area is the concern of the Cambodian people themselves. It is not vital to the security of the United States. Peace will be achieved when the outside powers withdraw their war material and related resources and allow the people of Cambodia, regardless of which side they are on—if any—to make their own decision as to how they should define their destiny, and what they should do to better the future of their country.

It has been said by the Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Habib, that the eyes of the world are on the U.S. response to the needs of embattled countries. He was referring specifically to Cambodia, though he may have had South Vietnam within the purview of his remarks as well.

Yes, the eyes of the world are on this country, but, more important, the eyes of the people of embattled countries are on this country because they know that we, among others, hold one of the keys which can unlock the door to peace.

I hope, Mr. President, that the resolution submitted by the distinguished Senator from Oregon (Mr. HATFIELD), which has my full and complete support, will do much to bring about relief, succor, and assistance to the people of Cambodia in the area of their food needs and in the area of their physical and medical needs.