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AFP REPORTS BOMBING OF LON NOL PALACE

Hong Kong AFP in English 1017 GMT 17 Mar 73 D--FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

[By Laurent Chevallier]

[Text] Phnom Penh, March 17 (AFP)--An unidentified plane today bombed the presidential palace of Cambodian head of state Marshal Lon Nol.

It was not immediately known whether the president or his staff were injured.

One bomb hit a barracks adjoining the place grounds, setting it ablaze and killing an unknown number of occupants.

A second fell actually inside the grounds, but the damage was not known.

I was passing close to the palace at the time of the attacks and I saw the plane, a twin-engined prop, circle overhead after releasing the two bombs.

The fact that the plane hung around to examine the damage coupled with the precision of the bombing and that this is the eve of the third anniversary of the military coup which toppled Prince Norodom Sihanouk, virtually ruled out the possibility that the bombs were dropped by accident.

According to unconfirmed reports, a third bomb was dropped elsewhere in the capital.

Apart from the dead, some 30 people were reported wounded in the explosion and fire at the barracks.

A number of people tried to drag the wounded from the ruins, while children covered with blood were taken away for treatment.

An officer in battledress, his face convulsed, was issuing contradictory orders to his men. When I asked him what had happened, he could only reply: I don't know, I don't know. The local population was filled with panic by the bombing, and fled their homes. I saw a child less than 10 years old trying to drag along a suitcase three times his size. I also saw a large housewife, half-naked, driving before her a group of children and two small pigs.

A minibus with diplomatic number plates was on the scene within minutes, transporting American civilians dressed in bulletproof jackets and carrying submachine guns.

Meanwhile, I learned that the American Embassy here has been put on maximum alert.

Despite the drama, however, the rest of the capital remained seemingly quite unaffected. At 1500 local, less than 2 hours after the bombing, the city was sunk in its usual afternoon torpor, but two T-28 fighter-bombers circled watchfully overhead.

A son-in-law of ousted Cambodian head of state Norodom Sihanouk seized a Cambodian Air Force plane today and bombed the presidential palace, an official spokesman said here.

President Lon Nol was unhurt in the attack, Information Minister Keam Reth said in a radio broadcast.

The bombing was carried out by So Photra, a former Cambodian Air Force officer and husband of Princess Norodom Bothum Bopha, one of Prince Sihanouk's daughters, said the minister.

The attack was part of a plot by traitors in Phnom Penh to topple the government, he said. Effective measures would be taken to re-establish order and security in the capital.

Marshal Lon Nol was in the palace, which is his official residence, during the attack. Also there were government ministers taking part in a Cabinet meeting. They, too, were unharmed.

It was the first attempt on Lon Nol's life since Prince Sihanouk was ousted 3 years ago.

LON NOL REPORTS TO NATION ON ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 1136 GMT 17 Mar 73 D

[17 March message to the nation by Lon Nol--recorded]

[Text] My respect to the supreme patriarchs of the two Buddhist orders, dear compatriots:

At 1320 the enemy of our Khmer Republic, who continues to destroy our regime, bribed one of our pilots to drop bombs on the Republic Palace with malicious intent to kill me. Two bombs were dropped outside the wall of the Republic Palace killing and wounding civilian citizens and several fighter families who assumed responsibility for ground work security [words indistinct]. This guilty and ferocious murder is evident proof of the enemy plan to destroy our republic and nation. By the grace of the three sacred jewels which protect our Khmer Republic, this enemy attack failed to achieve its goal. Our air force has launched a pursuit to destroy the fleeing plane. Moreover, the government and national armed forces have met and taken immediate measures in order to (?punish) all the enemies.

I appeal to all compatriots to remain calm and be ready to apply the government and national armed forces measures, and to maintain the struggle spirit in order to safeguard the life of our Khmer Republic and nation.

Phnom Penh, 17 March

INFORMATION MINISTER DETAILS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 1218 GMT 17 Mar 73 D

[17 March government statement read by Information Minister and Government Spokesman Keam Reth--recorded]

[Text] The Government of the Khmer Republic informs brother compatriots in Phnom Penh city of the following:

While the government was participating with the compatriots to celebrate the anniversary of the 18 March revolution, the traitorous clique which has been unmasked as the enemy of the Khmer Republic attempted to destroy the Cambodian regime by instigating trouble in the capital in collaboration with the plan of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese aggressors. Especially, on the afternoon of 17 March 1973 at 1320 a traitor named So Photra, former Cambodian Air Force officer and husband of Neang Norodom Botum Bopha called Chheuk, [one of Prince Sihanouk's daughters] stole a plane and dropped three bombs.

The first bomb was dropped outside the wall south of the Republic Palace in Chamcar Mon in front of Chak Angre Lycee, a former agriculture school. Another bomb was dropped on the military family houses near the wall north of the Republic Palace, killing several and wounding numerous military families and civilians. The third bomb was dropped in Kean Khlaing village north of Chromichanvar.

This incident did not harm the Republic Palace, or president of the republic, or members of the government taking part in a Cabinet meeting. This incident is not usual, but it is a plan of national treason and subversion in Phnom Penh city; the government cannot reveal entire circumstances of the incident.

This morning at the closing of the school term, during which a meeting was held, the traitor terrorists threw handgrenades killing and wounding some people, in a malicious intent to place the criminal blame on our government of the republic.

In view of this special situation, the government and the general staff of the Cambodian National Armed Forces have taken strict, immediate and special measures to maintain order and internal security of our country. With regard to these measures, brothers and compatriots will receive further news this evening. During this special situation, the government appeals to all compatriots in the capital and in the provinces, especially youths, students, teaching personnel, and workers of all factories, to maintain calm and order, to cooperate with the government and national armed forces in order to maintain security in the country, and to confront the criminal attempts of the enemy of the Khmer Republic who are implementing the plan of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese. Compatriots are urged to place their confidence in the government and national armed forces which are taking all measures to maintain internal security and efficiently safeguard the life of the Khmer Republic.

Phnom Penh, 17 March

NEW CURFEW IMPOSED IN PHNOM PENH

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 1228 GMT 17 Mar 73 D

[Text] Announcement of curfew: From tonight until further order traffic of all kinds along public roads in Phnom Penh will be prohibited from 2100 to 0500. Violation of this order will be punished according to current law. The municipal security forces will strictly apply this new order.

LON NOL DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN CAMBODIA

Paris AFP in French 1432 GMT 17 Mar 73 C--FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

[Text] Phnom Penh, 17 Mar--Marshal Lon Nol, the president of the Khmer Republic, officially proclaimed a state of emergency on Saturday evening.

Articles 7, 8 and 12 of the constitution, which guarantee public freedoms, have been suspended. The head of state announced these measures over the radio. He emphasized that he had previously consulted the presidents of the two legislative chambers.

Lon Nol Message

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 1510 GMT 17 Mar 73 D

[17 March Lon Nol message to the nation--recorded]

[Text] According to Decree 29 of the constitution, I have sworn before the nation that I will defend the motherland and accomplish, with good will, the duty of the president of the Khmer Republic. With respect to the constitution I will sacrifice my entire life for the benefit of the people and nation. At present our country is meeting a grave and urgent treat which hits all (precepts) of the republic and the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic. In consequence, following Decree 39 of the constitution of the republic, after consultation with the chairmen of the two houses "I proclaim a state of emergency and a state of siege," which I order all state organizations and authorities to apply from now on.

In compliance with Decree 22 of the constitution, in this time of national emergency, I proclaim the suspension of the rights and liberties mentioned in articles 7, 8, 11, and 12 of the constitution.

Phnom Penh, 17 March

LON NOL: REPUBLICAN CAMBODIANS DEFEND THE REPUBLIC

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 0000 GMT 18 Mar 73 D

[18 March message to the nation read by Marshal Lon Nol--recorded]

[Text] My homage to their eminences the supreme patriarchs of the two Buddhist orders, venerable monks, dear compatriots:

Today marks the third anniversary of the liberation of our nation from an obsolete regime, the rejection of the dictatorial, feudal monarchical regime on 18 March 1970 and the election of a republican one which was proclaimed in effect on 9 October [word indistinct]. This republican regime has opened new pages in a new era in which our Cambodian people can hope for the development of the nation and [word indistinct] in accordance with the principle of nationalism, democracy and people's welfare.

During 1972, although the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong aggressors used every means to intensify their attacks against us, our people still succeeded in carrying out a referendum for a republican constitution and overcame all obstacles to hold a general election to choose a president and legitimate legislative organizations, all on the basis of democracy and in line with the constitution. The Khmer Republic also is in possession of the law and state institutions [words indistinct] as in any other country.

(Achievements) in our Khmer Republic, as well as the successes in the international scene, have led the enemy of the Cambodian nation and of the Khmer Republic to even further increase subversive and splitting activities inside our community, such as the manhandling of the chairman of the students who refused to follow them. Also yesterday, the enemy ordered their ilk [words indistinct] meeting and then threw grenades, killing participants in this meeting, and they also secretly took airplanes to drop three [as heard]--bombs on the Republic Palace; however, all the republican Cambodians came to my rescue just in time and decided to always firmly defend our republic. Now, on the occasion of the third anniversary of the 18 March Day the people from all walks of life have been celebrating with great emotion this event in the city as well as in the provinces by holding ceremonies one after another during the last few days.

Today, on this anniversary day, I would like to ask all fraternal compatriots to respect the spirit of republicanism and make our Khmer Republic strong, well-disciplined, well-ordered and dynamic within the framework of our constitution.

It is the picture of this strong republic that is an important factor leading our nation, namely Cambodians throughout the country, toward victory over the enemy aggressors, toward solidarity and unity of the Cambodian nation, toward dignity and development of the Cambodian society, and toward the ever-desired peace for our Cambodian people.

Long live the Khmer Republic!

Phnom Penh, 18 March 1973.

INFORMATION OFFICIAL APPEALS TO NEWSMEN AT PRESS CONFERENCE

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 0510 GMT 18 Mar 73 D

[Excerpt] Yesterday afternoon at 1815, Undersecretary of State for Information Mr Thong Lim Huong held a press conference at the national radio conference hall to disclose these matters. After answering local and foreign journalists' questions regarding the capture of traitor So Potra and the presence of Norodom Botumbopha, who is still in Phnom Penh, Mr Thong Lim Huong appealed to the newspapermen in these special circumstances not to distort the facts in their articles. He also stressed that the government will not allow this situation to persist any longer.

PHNOM PENH BANS PUBLICATIONS OF NON-GOVERNMENT PAPERS

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 0530 GMT 18 Mar 73 D

[18 March communique of Defense Minister Lt Gen Thappana Nginn--recorded]

[Text] By announcement No 874/73 of 18 March 1973, considering the constitution of the Khmer Republic; considering Decree No 785/72-PRK of 15 October 1972 regarding the appointment of the Cabinet of Ministers; considering Ordinance No 39/72-PRK of 27 June 1972 ordering the promulgation of the press code in the Khmer Republic; considering the presidential letter dated 17 March 1973 proclaiming a state of emergency and siege, the minister of state in charge of national defense orders the following:

Article 1--In compliance with Article 67 of the press code, publication of all newspapers, news bulletins and magazines published throughout the Khmer Republic is suspended until further notice;

Article 2--The following papers are authorized to continue publication: The CAMBODIAN PRESS AGENCY [AKP], newspaper PRAYOCH KHMER, REALITE CAMBODGIENNE, the REPUBLICAIN, the KHMER REPUBLIC, NEAK TOR SOU, the magazine KANGTOAP, the magazine RUOB RUOM and the Chinese-language [word indistinct] newspaper;

Article 3--The competent defense ministry officials are charged with execution of this order.

Phnom Penh 18 March 1973

Signed: Lt Gen Thappana Nginn

ALL MEMBERS OF CAMBODIAN ROYAL FAMILY UNDER HOUSE ARREST

Paris AFP in English 0722 GMT 18 Mar 73 M--FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

[Text] Phnom Penh, March 18 (AFP)--All the members of the Cambodian royal family have been put under house arrest, it was announced today.

They include Prince Norodom Kantol and Prince Sisowath Monireth, close relatives of former Head of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk, as well as Prince Sihanouk's children.

Eight members of the royal family were rounded up during the night of Saturday to Sunday and taken to the home of Prince Sihanouk's mother, Queen Sisowath Kossamak, where they were put under police guard.

The eight were: Prince Sisowath Monireth, son of former Cambodian King Sisowath Monivong; Prince Norodom Kantol, cousin of Sihanouk and former Prime Minister Prince Norodom Virya, cousin of Sihanouk; Lt Col Sisowath Chivan Monirak, son-in-law of Sihanouk; Norodom Chakrapong, son of Sihanouk and air force officer; Norodom Ranarith, son of Sihanouk and former teacher; Princess Norodom Bothum Bopha, daughter of Sihanouk and wife of Capt So Phottra, who bombed the presidential palace yesterday; Lt Col Sisowath Khanarith, cousin of Sihanouk.

It was not known if Princess Bopha Devi, Sihanouk's daughter and a former dancer in the royal ballet, had been arrested.

TEXT OF LON NOL MESSAGE ON STATE OF EMERGENCY RELEASED

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 0830 GMT 18 Mar 73 D

[Text] Communique:

By Decree-Law No 1/73-DL-PRK of 17 March 1973, with regard to the constitution of the Khmer Republic, in particular Article 39; with regard to the current circumstances which constitute a grave and urgent threat to the republican institutions, the independence and the territorial integrity of the country; after consultation with the chairmen of the two houses and with the approval of the Cabinet, the president of the Khmer Republic promulgates the following:

Article 1--A state of emergency is declared effective throughout the territory of the Khmer Republic;

Article 2--Exercise of the rights and liberty guaranteed by articles 7, 8, 11 and 12 of the constitution is suspended as of 17 March 1973;

Article 3--This decree-law goes into effect immediately.

CAMBODIAN LEGISLATORS CALLED TO SESSION

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in Cambodian 1220 GMT 18 Mar 73 D

[Text] The chairmen of the National Assembly and the Senate invite all members of the two houses to meet at the National Assembly on 19 March at 1000 to discuss the recent circumstances.