

U.S. SECRET WAR IN CAMBODIA GIVES AID TO THE KHMER ROUGE

By JEREMY J. STONE

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The United States is waging a secret war in Cambodia against the Hun Sen government -- knowing full well that none other than the genocidal Khmer Rouge are likely to be the ultimate beneficiaries.

Even as White House officials shed crocodile tears over signs of the growing military strength of the Khmer Rouge, they are continuing to use U.S. financial and intelligence resources to weaken the Vietnamese-installed Hun Sen government, the only faction capable of preventing a takeover by the Khmer Rouge.

And the administration is pressuring Thailand to refrain from pulling the rug out from under the war itself, something that Thailand -- as the main conduit of arms to all the resistance forces -- is uniquely able to do.

According to well-informed sources, the non-communist resistance -- composed of forces loyal to Prince Norodom Sihanouk and to a former Prime Minister, Son Sann -- has a joint military command that makes requests for weapons, materiel and aid through Thai operatives and agents of the Central Intelligence Agency on the Thai border.

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A highly secret Working Group is the conduit for all lethal, materiel and financial aid to the non-communist resistance, except for that coming from China. It reviews battle plans, approves specific weapons, disburses direct cash payments and reimburses resistance leaders. Thailand and Malaysia train the resistance and Thailand provides logistical support; Singapore provides the weapons. The United States pays for virtually everything.

Now that these non-communist resistance forces are beginning to fight, there can be no denying that U.S. support for them is helping the Khmer Rouge by forcing the Hun Sen government to cope with three battle fronts rather than one.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government is intervening in Thai politics by backing its hard-line foreign minister, Siddhi Savetsila, against its prime minister, Chatchai Choonhavan, to keep the war going.

Through a Thai intelligence entity called 838, the Cambodian guerrillas receive weapons, food and other support. And weapons for the Khmer Rouge are sent to Thailand by China, and Khmer Rouge leaders are allowed to travel from their jungle bases in Thailand to offices in Bangkok to deal with securing them.

Thus, Thailand has the ability to stop the war and, indeed, to determine the winner. Under these circumstances, Thailand could, by gradually reducing support, weaken the Khmer Rouge enough to prevent them from taking over Cambodia once again. This is exactly what the Thai prime minister wants to do.

And why doesn't he? One major reason is that Washington currently finds his initiatives unacceptable.

The irony is exquisite. We are redoubling our efforts to overthrow Hun Sen while we announce that such a result would produce a Khmer Rouge takeover. Hun Sen is supposed to save us from this contradiction by organizing a wholly implausible

four-party coalition government with the Khmer Rouge. From every objective point of view, we are allied with the genocidal Khmer Rouge.

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