

Warring Cambodian factions sign treaty

PARIS — Cambodia's warring factions and representatives of 18 nations signed a peace treaty Wednesday with hopes that a U.N.-supervised transition to free elections will end a half-century of bloodshed in Southeast Asia. "A dark page of history has been turned," said President Francois Mitterrand of France, opening the ceremony at an ornate conference center in the French capital. "Cambodia is about to resume its place in the world," he added.

Secretary of State James Baker delivered a scathing condemnation of the Khmer Rouge guerrilla faction shortly before signing the U.N.-sponsored peace treaty, which will give that rebel group a share of power. He said the world had not forgotten the bloodbath during Khmer Rouge rule of Cambodia in 1975-78. Hours before the ceremony began, relief workers and the military wing of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, one of the non-Communist guerrilla factions, accused

Phnom Penh government forces of shelling several positions in northwestern Cambodia. It took 30 minutes for the assembled officials to sign the gold-embossed red book containing the text of the treaty in English, French, Russian, Chinese and Khmer. Waving banners reading "Peace in Cambodia," hundreds of Cambodian exiles cheered Prince Norodom Sihanouk when he arrived a few hours before the signing ceremony. He will head a largely figurehead interim govern-

ment before elections.

The treaty is intended to end two decades of war in Cambodia, including 13 years of civil war between the Vietnam-backed government of Prime Minister Hun Sen and the three-party guerrilla coalition.

Despite the treaty signing, fears persist about the intentions of the Khmer Rouge, who have changed neither their leaders nor their policies since their rule.

Syria seeks solid front from other Arab states

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syria sought commitments from other Arab nations Wednesday that they would not strike separate peace agreements with Israel during next week's international peace conference.

Israel and Palestinian representatives on Wednesday formally announced they would attend the talks, and Israel said Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir would lead its delegation.

Shamir's decision may have led to a major split in the government. Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy announced he would not attend the conference, Israel's army radio reported.

Senior Arab officials were attending a strategy planning session in Damascus to coordinate their stance during the international peace conference, which opens next Wednesday in Madrid, Spain.

Officials close to the meeting said Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestine Liberation Organization agreed not to strike any separate peace deal with Israel. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

Egypt is attending the peace conference only as an observer and po-

tential mediator.

Wednesday's planning session by Arab states in Damascus was dominated by a U.S. proposal for most Arab states to participate in broad regional talks with Israel immediately after the ceremonial opening of the conference, the sources close to the meeting said.

The conference is expected to break up into three sets of bilateral talks between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, and Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

Then the other states in the region are supposed to join in discussions on broader issues such as arms control, water and energy. Many Arab states perceive this as a move that would automatically give Israel the status of an equal in the region that has tried to ostracize it.

Syrian President Hafez Assad and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat agreed last week that Jewish settlement building, the status of Jerusalem and U.N. resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories should be discussed at an initial session.

Fed portrays economy mired in pessimism

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve painted a generally bleak picture of business conditions around the country in a survey released Wednesday, depicting widespread pessimism over when things will get better.

The survey, compiled from information gathered by the Fed's 12 regional banks, found a variety of economic worries — from sluggish consumer spending and lackluster home sales to cutbacks in factory production.

Analysts said the report highlighted the economy's perilous state and the possibility of a double-dip recession in which a period of weak growth is followed early next year by another recession.

The central bank survey, conducted eight times a year, will be used by Fed policy-makers when they meet Nov. 5 to consider whether to make further cuts in interest rates.

The central bank last eased credit conditions Sept. 13 when it reduced the discount rate to 5 percent and also nudged the federal funds rate to 5.25 percent.

Many economists believe the Fed will vote next month to cut interest

rates further, especially in light of growing pressure from the Bush administration to do more to bolster the sagging economy with a presidential election year approaching.

On Wednesday, the White House blamed a sluggish economy for President Bush's drop in public opinion polls.

A new Washington Post-ABC News poll found that only 37 percent of those surveyed supported Bush's handling of the economy, while the number who would vote for Bush for re-election fell to 47 percent, down from 60 percent right after the Persian Gulf War.

"The country is obviously concerned about coming out of the recession. So are we," presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said when asked about the drop. "We do believe that we are in a period of recovery. But it is slower than hoped for."

Economists reviewing the new Fed survey noted that even the manufacturing sector was beginning to falter.

The national survey is used by the Federal Open Market Committee as a basis for discussing economic conditions. Two previous reports also indicated concern about the recovery.

TOWARD NORMALCY



Talks with Hanoi may begin next month in an effort to normalize relations with the government in Vietnam.

AT-A-GLANCE

- **Population:** 68,488,000 (1990 est.)
- **Language:** The official language is Vietnamese, French and English are also spoken.
- **Religions:** Buddhists, Confucians and Taoists are most numerous. Roman Catholics, animists, Muslims and Protestants also are present.
- **Government:** Communist. The head of state is President Vo Chi Cong; the head of the government is Prime Minister Do Muoi. The head of the Communist Party is Nguyen Van Linh.

CHRONOLOGY OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

- May 13, 1961: U.S. bolsters its 685 military advisers when President Kennedy sends 100 specially trained jungle fighters to aid the South Vietnamese against rebel guerrillas.
- Aug. 7, 1964: Congress approves the Tonkin resolution giving President Johnson a freehand to protect Southeast Asia.
- Jan. 27, 1973: The United States and North Vietnam formally call an end to their undeclared war.
- Aug. 15, 1973: The United States pullout completed when American warplanes cease bombing missions in Indochina.
- April 29-30, 1975: Saigon falls
- Jan. 20, 1990: Vietnamese and U.S. specialists agree to conduct joint activities by the end of February to account for Americans reported missing from the war.
- Nov. 11, 1990: Vietnam offers U.S. use of former U.S. naval base if Washington lifts 26-year-old trade embargo.
- July 29, 1991: The State Department's highest-ranking Asia envoy says Washington will not forge diplomatic ties with Vietnam until a Cambodian peace accord is signed and MIA issue is resolved.
- Oct. 23, 1991: Cambodia's warring factions and representatives of 18 nations sign a peace treaty.

Baker says Vietnam talks could start next month

PARIS — In a step toward reconciliation, Secretary of State James Baker said Wednesday that preliminary talks on normalizing U.S. relations with Vietnam may begin next month.

The evolution of the talks would depend on Hanoi's cooperation in resolving the issue of U.S. servicemen missing in action in the Vietnam War, Baker said before a meeting with Vietnam's foreign minister, Nguyen Manh Cam.

About 2,300 Americans are listed as missing in action in Indochina from the Vietnam War, including 1,678 believed missing in Vietnam itself.

Baker said it would be "appropriate" if the first U.S.-Vietnamese talks began "in the next month or so."

His unexpected announcement preceded by hours another historical moment rooted in the Vietnam conflict — the signing by 19 nations of a peace treaty ending the two-decade Cambodian civil war.

Baker and his Vietnamese counterpart were in Paris for the signing, which symbolically ended Hanoi's military involvement in Cambodia that began with a 1978 invasion to drive the murderous Khmer Rouge from power.

The secretary of state described the proposed preliminary discussions as a path that could lead to normalizing relations with Vietnam.

"The United States is prepared to begin discussions with Vietnam concerning the issues and modalities that would be involved in normalizing relations," Baker said.

"The scope and pace of these discussions of course will be governed by the degree with which Vietnam continues to cooperate with the United States on the very, very important issue of our prisoners of war and our missing in action."

Memories of only U.S. war loss fading

WASHINGTON — For young Americans, Hamburger Hill is ancient history, along with the Alamo and Bull Run. Even adults might have trouble recalling that troubling battle for a hilltop in the Ashau Valley that so frustrated this country in 1969 and took the lives of several hundred GIs.

It lasted 10 days, its name evidently derived from the soldiers' observation that the struggle for an insignificant piece of terrain had turned into a "meat grinder."

America won a war in the Persian Gulf this year and to many the only war it ever lost — in Vietnam

— seemed somehow redeemed. Maybe that's why there was little chagrin Wednesday over Secretary of State James Baker's suggestion of normalizing relations with an old enemy, Hanoi. No one cried "traitor."

Said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., a much-wounded Vietnam veteran who chairs the Senate's new POW-MIA Committee: "We've managed to put the Japanese divisiveness behind us. We put the German-Italian-Axis Power divisiveness behind us. You have to move on in life and people understand that." A quiet encounter last week in a

senator's office further made the point. John McCain and Bui Tin sat down over a cup of coffee.

As a downed Navy flier, McCain, a Republican from Arizona, was held for 5 1/2 years in a North Vietnamese prison. His attack bomber had been shot down over Hanoi in 1967.

And his guest was a colonel on the other side. On April 30, 1975, Tin's tank unit crashed through the gates of the presidential palace in Saigon. He accepted South Vietnam's surrender. Tin has since denounced the Communist regime in Hanoi.

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