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STATEMENT ON VIETNAMESE ATTACKS IN CAMBODIA

The Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable James Kelleher, issued the following statement today on the recent Vietnamese armed attacks inside Cambodia.

"The Government of Canada is gravely concerned about reports of armed attacks by personnel of the armed forces of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on civilian camps inside Cambodia of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). Particularly distressing are the reports that Vietnamese soldiers, deploying tanks and heavy artillery, attacked the CGDK camp at Rithysen/Nong Samet on Christmas Day, causing some 100 Cambodian casualties. According to reports, approximately 60,000 Cambodian civilians were forced to flee the Vietnamese onslaught, seeking refuge across the border in Thailand. This attack followed Vietnamese assaults earlier this month on three other CGDK camps and coincided with the outbreak of fighting elsewhere in the area. It brings to approximately 100,000 the number who have fled into Thailand in recent weeks. Shells from the fighting are also reported to have landed inside Thailand forcing affected Thai villagers to leave their homes and seek shelter elsewhere.

Canada condemns these Vietnamese attacks which are in violation of the principles of international conduct and resolutions of the United Nations that have repeatedly called for the immediate withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. Our principal concern is for the safety and welfare of the affected Cambodian and Thai nationals. The human suffering and hardship caused by the Vietnamese attacks is unacceptable to Canada and places an intolerable burden on the international community, especially on Thailand, to provide humanitarian relief to these innocent civilians.

The Government of Canada, therefore, calls on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to cease at once all hostile activities in Cambodia, to refrain from initiating attacks on any other camps of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and to respond constructively to proposals for the settlement of the conflict in Cambodia."