

12 Die in Red Rocket Attack; U.S. Embassy Nearly Hit

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Rockets and shells hit southern sections of Phnom Penh Monday, killing at least a dozen civilians in a crowded market area and falling within 100 yards of the United States Embassy.

There were at least 15 rounds in the barrage.

It was the first shelling of the Cambodian capital in 10 days. Prior to that respite, almost daily attacks since Dec. 23 killed nearly 200 persons and wounded at least 500.

Preliminary police reports said the insurgents fired both high-explosive 105mm artillery shells and 122mm rockets.

Three rounds, reportedly 105mm shells, fell near the American Embassy. One exploded on the pavement almost diagonally across from the embassy building, and two others landed in the grounds of the presidential palace.

The embassy suffered no damage, but it was not immediately known what the explosions inside the palace grounds did.

Most of the shells and rockets landed in the area of the Sa Deoum Ko market in the southwestern corner of the city. It was jammed with midafternoon shoppers and vendors.

The dead, dying and wounded sprawled on the sidewalks and under the market stalls. Many of the victims were young children and women.

Several buildings were engulfed in flames, and heavy smoke blackened the sky.

An undetermined number of persons were caught in the blazing buildings. Others fled into the adjacent streets and squares.

Ambulance service was inadequate, and some of the wounded were propped up in the seats of pedal-pushed tri-shaws. A number of persons ran aimlessly through the streets, moaning and crying. Others took newsmen by the hand and insisted on showing them the mangled corpses.



A young girl and her brother hide in a covered, makeshift foxhole from rockets and artillery that have been raining on Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh. (UPI)

"You must see, you must see," they said.

Police with loudspeakers ordered the crowds to disperse, telling them: "This is not a theatrical spectacle."

Overhead, helicopters and light spotter planes circled the city's environs, presumably in

search of the insurgent gun and rocket emplacements.

Khmer Rouge gunners in previous attacks were reported firing U.S. 105mm howitzers captured from the Cambodian army from positions south of the Prek Thnot river, six miles from the southern edge of Phnom Penh.