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THE UNITED STATES AND CAMBODIA

On April 30, 1970 President Nixon announced the launching of combined US-South Vietnamese attacks against major enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia. This military operation was limited in extent, purpose and duration. Its objective was to capture enemy stores and supplies, and to prevent the enemy from building his forces in the sanctuary areas for attacks on allied troops in South Viet-Nam. It was carried out during May and June, and on June 30 the President reported that all US forces had withdrawn from Cambodia in accordance with the schedule announced at the start of the operation. +

Results of the Operation

From a military standpoint the operation was highly successful. Our major military objectives in Cambodia were achieved, and most of the communist forces were obliged to evacuate the sanctuary areas. Approximately 15,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops were killed or captured. Huge stores of war materiel and food were taken. In the month of May, in Cambodia alone, our and South Vietnamese forces captured a total amount of enemy arms, equipment, ammunition and food nearly equal to what we captured in all of Viet-Nam during 1969.

As a result, the communist war effort was seriously set back, and there has been a dramatic slackening of enemy offensive moves in South Viet-Nam. We gained time for further strengthening the South Vietnamese forces, and by destroying communist ammunition and supplies we saved many American lives. US casualties in Viet-Nam are down 60 per cent from what they were three months before the operation.

US Action Protects US Forces in Viet-Nam

In making his decision to attack the enemy's sanctuaries in Cambodia, President Nixon carefully considered all of the alternatives. He stated that this action was indispensable for the continuing success of our program of withdrawal of US troops from Viet-Nam. This operation was undertaken to protect American forces in South Viet-Nam. As far as we are concerned, this

was not a war in Cambodia or primarily about Cambodia. Our action must be viewed in light of our policy toward Cambodia, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong use of the sanctuaries, and our program for redeploying US troops from Viet-Nam.

United States Policy Toward Cambodia

On April 16, 1969 the United States Government issued a declaration that, "In conformity with the United Nations Charter, the United States of America recognizes and respects the sovereignty, independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia within its present frontiers." This continues to be our policy.

From May 1965 -- when Prince Sihanouk broke relations with us -- until August 1969, when we reopened our embassy in Phnom Penh, we did not have a diplomatic mission in Cambodia. The United States Government did not participate in, nor was it involved in any way with, the deposal of Sihanouk by the Cambodian parliament. The question of who governs Cambodia is for the Cambodians to decide. Our embassy has continued to transact business with the Cambodian Government, as have most diplomatic missions in Phnom Penh. The Cambodian Government, following the removal of Prince Sihanouk as Chief of State, has pursued a foreign policy of neutrality.

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Violate Cambodian Neutrality

The war in Viet-Nam, however, has imposed severe strains on Cambodia's neutrality. For over five years, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces occupied military sanctuaries along the Cambodian frontier with South Viet-Nam. Some of these extended up to 20 miles into Cambodia in flagrant violation of that country's territorial integrity. These communist-occupied areas were bases for hit-and-run attacks on American and South Vietnamese forces in South Viet-Nam and were major logistic and training centers. About 40,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars used the sanctuaries in Cambodia for base areas, infiltration of personnel and shipment of supplies. They also procured arms, food and other supplies from Cambodian sources. Large quantities of heavy weapons and bulk supplies moved through the port of Sihanoukville (now Kompong Som) and along roads to enemy forces in South Viet-Nam. Prince Sihanouk acknowledged the existence of these sanctuaries on Cambodian territory and from time to time publicly condemned the communist Vietnamese presence in an apparent effort to force them to withdraw.

Use of Cambodia Important to Hanoi

The utility of Cambodia to Hanoi became crucial in 1969, when the North Vietnamese decided after the defeat of their 1968 Tet and two subsequent offensives that they would shift to a strategy of "protracted struggle." This strategy, as outlined in detail in a document issued in August 1969 by COSVN (The Central

Office for South Viet-Nam," Hanoi's main headquarters for operations in South Viet-Nam), called for the withdrawal of the bulk of the communist main forces into the Cambodian base areas, from which they would wait out the US troop withdrawals under Vietnamization, stage occasional forays, or "high points," to maintain military pressure on the allies, and support the communist infrastructure and local forces left behind in South Viet-Nam.

Communists Move in April to Enlarge Sanctuary Areas

After Sihanouk was deposed by the parliament, the Cambodian Government tried to enforce Cambodian neutrality more strictly by closing Sihanoukville to communist traffic and seeking negotiations to obtain a North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong withdrawal from Cambodian territory. In late March 1970, the North Vietnamese began moving more actively out of their sanctuaries and deeper into Cambodia in an effort to establish a solid communist-held zone reaching to Sihanoukville and the sea along 600 miles of the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border. This would have given them a far stronger position in Cambodia than they had ever had; it would have assured them of potentially unlimited supply and replacement capabilities; and it would thus have posed a critically increased threat to remaining US forces nearby across the South Vietnamese border. This would have called the feasibility of continuing the President's policy of withdrawal of US troops from South Viet-Nam -- Vietnamization -- into serious question.

US Troop Replacement Progressing

On April 20, 1970 President Nixon told the nation about his plans for the withdrawal from Viet-Nam of 150,000 American troops to be completed during the spring of 1971. Less than a year earlier, in June 1969, the President ordered the initial withdrawal of US troops. This and subsequent replacements of US forces by the armed forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam lowered the troop ceiling by a total of 115,500 men by April 15, 1970. The redeployment of the additional 150,000 men will bring the ceiling down to 284,000.

The rate of withdrawal of our troops from Viet-Nam depends on the three criteria set by President Nixon when he first outlined his program for the redeployment of US forces: progress in the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese forces, progress in the Paris peace talks and the level of enemy activity. The President's April 20 decision was based entirely on the progress of Vietnamization. It was made after consultation with US commanders in the field and has the approval of the Government of Viet-Nam. The timing and pace of the new withdrawals in the over-all schedule will be determined by the President's best judgment of the current military and diplomatic situation. The President has stressed that, as replacements of the US forces take place, no actions will be taken which endanger the attainment of our objective, the right of self-determination for the people of South Viet-Nam.

Communist Threat to Cambodia

In April 1970 the communists drove Cambodian troops and administrative officials out of the border areas. The communists then moved westward and began encircling the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, at the same time moving to consolidate their sanctuaries on the eastern border and also threatening Sihanoukville. Although they still deny the presence of their troops in Cambodia (a fact publicly conceded by Prince Sihanouk, in Peking, on a number of occasions), the North Vietnamese thus stripped away all pretense of respecting the sovereignty or neutrality of Cambodia. The Cambodian Government requested assistance from the United States and all other countries in an appeal broadcast by Premier Lon Nol on April 14, 1970. In accepting military assistance from countries which responded to this appeal, Cambodia is exercising the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defense" recognized in Article 51 of the UN Charter.

US Military Assistance to Cambodia

We deeply sympathize with the plight of the seven million Cambodians whose country is being invaded by the North Vietnamese. We are encouraging other countries of the region to give diplomatic and material support to the independence and neutrality of Cambodia.

Guidelines for our own assistance to Cambodia were outlined by President Nixon on June 30, 1970. There will be no US ground personnel in Cambodia except for the regular US Embassy staff in Phnom Penh, and there will be no US advisers with Cambodian units. We will conduct air missions against enemy troops and materiel in Cambodia when such operations will enhance the safety of US and allied personnel in Viet-Nam. On January 29, 1971 Secretary Rogers said, "...we are prepared to use air power to the fullest possible extent necessary to protect American lives." Pointing out that we and Cambodia at the present time "have a common enemy, common objectives," the Secretary added, "the principal objective of the United States as far as Cambodia is concerned is to prevent the enemy from reestablishing its base areas in Cambodia."

The United States is also providing military assistance to the Cambodians. During fiscal year 1970 we supplied about \$8.9 million of equipment suitable for their armed forces -- small arms, mortars, trucks, aircraft parts, communications equipment and medical supplies. On August 24, 1970 we announced our intention to provide \$40 million for similar equipment and for training costs during fiscal year 1971. Another \$60 million in assistance funds were added later. On January 8, 1971 the Congress appropriated an additional \$85 million for military assistance to Cambodia and \$70 million for economic assistance. We have also turned over materiel captured in the communist base areas in Cambodia to the Cambodian Government to help it defend its neutrality and independence.