

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

WAR
FILE SUBJ.
DATE SUB-CAT.
5/70

May 18, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR NSC STAFF MEMBERS

FROM: Bob Houdek *BH*

The attached Backgrounder given by Mr. Kissinger is for internal use and information only and no distribution is to be made outside the National Security Council staff.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH DR. HENRY A. KISSINGER,
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

AT 9:30 A.M. EDT.

MAY 16, 1970

SATURDAY

KEY BISCAYNE, FLORIDA

MR. ZIEGLER: Dr. Kissinger is here to take your questions regarding Southeast Asia. The ground rules are as always, attributable to White House officials, no direct quotations.

Let me repeat those ground rules: White House officials, no direct quotations.

DR. KISSINGER: Does anyone have a question for my answers? (Laughter)

Q Dr. Kissinger, we have been familiar, because of the President's speech to the Nation, and the press conference that he held, and the two backgrounder sessions that were held by a White House official who you know ---

DR. KISSINGER: You are going to get the verbs today. (Laughter)

Q As the reasons for the Cambodian operation, it has been presented to us steadfastly as a matter involving the protection of the security of American forces in South Vietnam.

Now Secretary of Defense Laird has held a meeting with reporters in Washington in which he says that the threat from Communist forces in these sanctuaries to our forces in South Vietnam was receding, the threat was reduced for U. S. troops entering Cambodia because the enemy was looking the other way towards its operations in Cambodia.

We found, he said, that Vietnamese Communist forces were facing in the opposite direction from South Vietnam and moving away.

Now this is diametrically opposed to everything the Administration has said publicly and privately thus far. I would ask you, who has been lying to us and through us to the American people?

DR. KISSINGER: I like the constructive spirit in which the question has been put.

No one has been lying to you. The explanation that we have given to you on this subject has been perfectly consistent. We made the point in the two backgrounders and the President said in his address that the Communist forces were moving out of their base areas into Cambodia.

In order to accomplish this objective, it was physically inevitable that they would face away from Vietnam and into Cambodia. There was no other way they could go into Cambodia except by facing into Cambodia. Our concern was that if they succeeded in creating a contiguous belt of territory which would then be supplied from the seas, coupled with the base areas that had already been established, that this would create an intolerable situation in South Vietnam, not that month, but in the months to follow.

The location of the caches that we have found makes it perfectly obvious that the North Vietnamese effort in Cambodia was basically directed towards South Vietnam, and whether in any tactical period they would face one way or the other was not the decisive consideration.

The decisive consideration was, as the President pointed out and as I repeated, that the North Vietnamese forces were pushing into Cambodia for the purpose of establishing a contiguous belt of territory or maybe taking over the whole country, and that after that had been accomplished, if the caches had remained in the area where they were, that the situation would become intolerable.

Nobody was lying. The Secretary and the President emphasized two different aspects of the same problem.

Q Henry, can I ask you about another facet of this operation? The South Vietnamese, according to Mr. Ziegler and other spokesmen, are acting without U. S. control; that is, we are not exercising control over what they do.

DR. KISSINGER: The South Vietnamese forces?

Q Yes. What is to prevent them from continuing their operations, and in effect annexing the country of Cambodia as another province and bogging down to the point where our withdrawal of American troops is threatened?

DR. KISSINGER: We have established the schedule of our withdrawal both from Cambodia and from South Vietnam. We intend to keep both of those schedules and we will not permit ourselves to be diverted from either of these schedules.

With respect to South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia, our concern has been with the independence and neutrality of Cambodia. We do not want Cambodia to become an extension of North Vietnamese power, but we also have no interest in having Cambodia become a province of South Vietnam, nor do we have any reason to suppose that this will take place.

We are in consultation with the government of South Vietnam. We have every reason to believe that the sanctuary operations will be completed by South Vietnamese troops on approximately the same schedule as ours, and that what the

South Vietnamese troops will do in Cambodia after that will depend on penetrations of the North Vietnamese, but will not have an autonomous character.

Q Do we have any assurance to that affect by the Saigon government, or is that just a hope on our part?

DR. KISSINGER: We have reason to believe that this will be the case.

Q Are you saying that they are going to pull out when we pull out -- that is what you have reason to believe?

DR. KISSINGER: We believe that the sanctuary operations will be completed around July 1. Now it may be that if there are any supplies left that are required to be removed and have not been able to be removed on schedule, that this may slip by a few days, but in effect, what I am saying is what you have suggested.

Q Dr. Kissinger, another high level Administration source is reported to have said that although our original explanation of the target in Cambodia was described as COSVN, a sophisticated and rather extensive installation, that our forces in fact went around it on either side and missed it. Does this jell with the intelligence you have around the town of Memot in Cambodia?

DR. KISSINGER: We have not been short of high-ranking officials expressing views in the last few weeks. (Laughter)

If you remember the backgrounder that I gave the night that the operation started, you will remember that I emphasized the fact that the primary objective was the supplies; the secondary objective was the communication system.

I said then, before the operation started, that we had no real expectation of capturing the COSVN personnel and that the possibility of finding the specific location from which it was operating at any one time was not very great.

It is true that the initial operation was designed to go around the areas where we thought the greatest concentrations of the enemy were in order to minimize casualties and on the theory that we were above all, interested in the supply system.

With respect to these objectives, the figures on caches speak for themselves. The communications were substantially disrupted for a matter of weeks. They are slowly coming back, but even so, the general ability to conduct coordinated operations has been disrupted for some period, which is however, shorter than the period it takes to replace supplies, because this is only a question of replacing communications equipment.

COSVN headquarters is a mobile unit that operates out of four or five locations, and it would have been miraculous if we had found the particular site in one operation.

We believe that in the area we have achieved substantially what we went in to do.

Q We asked this question at your last back-grounder, but do you have any indication yet what is going to happen to these arms that are being seized? Are they going to be sent to the Cambodian government?

DR. KISSINGER: We really have a massive problem getting them out of there to begin with. They exceed the expectation, and as I pointed out before, they represent about six to eight month's supplies depending on the category, at full operation for the North Vietnamese.

Many of them we will take out. Some of them we will have a blow-up in place, because in the time available before the rainy season, we will not be able to get them all out. Some, particularly small arms ammunition that fits Cambodian rifles, we may give to the Cambodians, but we have not made a decision on how to dispose of these yet. Actually, the equipment is more than the Cambodians could handle at this particular moment.

Q Dr. Kissinger, what about future operations in Cambodia by us and/or the South Vietnamese?

DR. KISSINGER: The President has indicated that we are not planning any future ground operations in Cambodia. Secondly, with respect to any other operations, these will depend on the North Vietnamese activities directed at our forces in South Vietnam, but we will not become involved with combat forces in Cambodia for Cambodian objectives.

Q You made the point about the South Vietnamese not engaging in autonomous operations?

DR. KISSINGER: The question is, will the South Vietnamese become involved in autonomous operations?

Q You used the word autonomous for South Vietnamese operations, and I was wondering whether you were ---

DR. KISSINGER: The South Vietnamese sanctuary operations are going to conclude as I pointed out, on roughly the same time scale as ours. We will pull out our advisors and any logistics personnel by June 30.

If a massive North Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia should develop, then the relationship and the reaction of the South Vietnamese would have to be reserved, but we will not become involved with American military personnel in Cambodia.

Q The point I was making, in answering, before you talked in terms of a possible future South Vietnamese action on Cambodia would not be autonomous. I assume you were saying that what they would do, they would certainly consult with us first, or what?

DR. KISSINGER: I think you misunderstood my phrase. I said that the South Vietnamese operations that are being conducted in Cambodia today we are aware of, and they have generally consulted with us.

That phase of the operation which is directed at the sanctuaries, as I pointed out, will be completed. What happens after that -- if after some time period there should be new developments -- then this will have to depend in part on the assessment of the situation, but we will not, and there is no intention, and we would not favor any attempt by South Vietnam to annex Cambodia or to make Cambodia a province of South Vietnam.

Our interest in Southeast Asia is the independence and neutrality of Cambodia, and we would be prepared at any point to undertake international arrangements that would guarantee the independence and neutrality of Cambodia.

Q Can you tell me if our intelligence indicates that the Communists might have the capability for a massive offensive around the end of June in Cambodia and do I understand correctly that if that should occur, we would still leave and leave the South Vietnamese to fight that offensive or challenge it?

DR. KISSINGER: I am very reluctant to make so many assumptions. First, there can be little doubt that the Vietnamese ability to mount a major offensive has been severely impaired by the operations in the sanctuaries. We believe that the North Vietnamese ability to launch a major offensive in South Vietnam has been set back by at least six to eight months so that the usual dry season offensive would have to be at least substantially delayed over what seemed possible a few months ago.

Within Cambodia the problem is that the forces required to mount a major offensive are much smaller than the forces that would be required to mount a major offensive within South Vietnam.

So it is theoretically possible for the North Vietnamese to mount an offensive in Cambodia before they are capable of launching one in South Vietnam. Still, we do not look for a major Communist offensive in Cambodia at the end of June and we think that the Communist forces in Cambodia will have to devote many of their energies to consolidate what they now have in Northeastern Cambodia and that they will not be able to make a sustained attack on the Southern part of Cambodia for several months to come, so that your question is very hypothetical.

In any event, we intend to withdraw our forces by June 30.

Q What arms are we giving to Cambodia?

DR. KISSINGER: As the President pointed out, we are giving mostly small arms. We are not giving sophisticated, complicated equipment that requires military advisors or instructors. I think the last type of weapon we have given are mortars. We have not gone beyond that. We generally give them infantry-type weapons.

Q What forces do the North Vietnamese have in Northeastern Cambodia that they are going to consolidate and if they have a big sanctuary there, why aren't we going after that one?

DR. KISSINGER: This is the bloodthirstist bunch I have ever seen. Those evenings in Miami really make them raring to go. Never get them up so early in the morning, Ron. (Laughter)

MR. ZIEGLER: You should see them at 11:00. (Laughter)

DR. KISSINGER: You can push these arguments very far. The other day one of your colleagues pointed out to me that North Vietnam is a sanctuary, too, and suggested that we go after that, although I had the impression -- I may have been wrong -- that we might not have found her unqualified approval if we had taker her advice.

MR. ZIEGLER: Do you want to stand up and be recognized? (Laughter)

DR. KISSINGER: I will tell you, you have a pretty bloodthirsty bunch here.

At any rate, the purpose of this operation was to go after the well-established logistics areas where they had the communications facilities and had the supplies built up over the period of months. They use these supply caches as a sort of traditional rear area supply base, and then we would move the supplies forward out of there ahead of their troops, as I pointed out before, and adopted the pattern that is typical of the North Vietnamese operation of fighting into their supplies and they would always position ahead of themselves just enough for one offensive push.

When that was finished, the troops would withdraw into the base areas and they would stock their forward caches again when they were ready to mount an offensive. This was a very tough problem for us, because while we were looking for caches in South Vietnam, and while we usually found over a period of eight to ten months -- usually a period of about ten months -- what we have found in two weeks in Cambodia, this was a slow process which did not touch the core of their supply system, and which they could replenish after we picked it up.

Another thing these bases did was to give them rest areas where they were relatively safe from allied intervention. We had prisoners tell us that they spent as much as three-quarters of their time in the base areas, and one-quarter of their time fighting in South Vietnam.

Incidentally, 90 percent of the prisoners we have captured have fought only in South Vietnam, have never fought in Cambodia. Of course we have not captured any of these who are fighting in Cambodia, so this is not a conclusive test.

Now, of course, unless we are going to occupy all of Cambodia, it is clear that there are going to be some areas in which there are going to be North Vietnamese, but to say that there are going to be North Vietnamese does not mean that they are going to have a well-stocked, well-supplied system of caches from which trails lead forward into the combat zone and from which they have a highly developed logistics system, and therefore, we believe it will take them at least a year to build up a sanctuary in Northeastern Cambodia of the type which we have encountered all along the North Vietnamese

Even if they did that, it would then be about two days march from the South Vietnam frontier and another day or two or three from there to wherever the combat would be, and it would complicate their supply situation.

We have never said that this operation in Cambodia is going to be decisive and perhaps I should use this opportunity to point out what I think it will do and what I think it will not do.

What it will do for a period of some months is to decouple for the first time in years their main force operations from their guerrilla operation. Those of you who know North Vietnam will know their main force of operation was to keep the main efforts in the frontiers or within South Vietnam, and use them to create turmoil in target areas and to relieve pressure on their guerrillas in the target provinces. Then the guerrillas could be used to churn things up for a time, and then when it was needed, the main forces could come back.

As General Giap pointed out, we had the problem that we could not fight the main forces and the guerrillas simultaneously. When we fought the guerrillas, the main forces were active, and vice versa.

For a period of ten months, depending on how you affect the supply picture, the main forces are pushed back into Cambodia and will not be able to operate as large military units within South Vietnam.

Secondly, while they have supply caches in South Vietnam, they will now have to be careful about how they use their ammunition. We have captured, for example, enough weapons to equip 40 battalions of their present battalion size.

They have about 10,000-plus troops that were coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and they were slated to arrive within III and IV Corps area within the next few weeks. It is going to be very difficult for them to find weapons and ammunitions to use.

So again, while it is possible for them to conduct operations at a somewhat low guerrilla level, it will be more difficult for them to have the high points they had planned again for some six to ten months.

That, in turn, should give the South Vietnamese an opportunity to consolidate themselves. We believe they have gained a lot of confidence through these Cambodian operations. They had never conducted division-size operations before and they have now turned out to be quite effective and in fact, its a symptom of the time that now people are more worried about their aggressiveness where six months ago everyone was saying these units could not fight at all.

So all we are claiming is that we gain six to ten months for the South Vietnamese to gain the confidence and for them to be able to target themselves on the guerrillas and to be able to stand on their feet if the sanctuaries are rebuilt. It would be foolhardy for somebody to build

those sanctuaries so close to the frontiers, because somebody might come after them again.

Q Like Americans?

DR. KISSINGER: Not Americans. So this is what has been achieved, and I gave you this long answer because it might explain why a Communist base in Northeast Cambodia is not as worrisome as a series of base areas right smack up against the frontier which they were before, and all along the frontier.

Q Some remarks by spokesmen at the State Department yesterday were interpreted as public encouragement for South Vietnam and Cambodia for a joint defense plan for the defense of Cambodia. Are those interpretations correct? Are we encouraging them to form a joint defense plan?

DR. KISSINGER: It is consistent with the Nixon doctrine that the countries of Asia should, in the first instance, attempt to defend themselves by their own resources, and when that is not possible, do it on a regional basis.

Therefore, it is certainly consistent with the Nixon doctrine for the countries in this region to cooperate with each other for their mutual defense. Our concern is the effort these countries make in one part of the region and the support we have promised them in other parts of the region, and to make sure that they don't scatter their efforts.

But as a general principle, over a long period of time, it is certainly correct to say that we believe that the countries of Southeast Asia should take the primary responsibility for their joint defense. We have always said this. This is nothing new.

Q Could you assess for us the probability of Prince Sihanouk coming back to Cambodia and setting up his government? Is that a likelihood, in your opinion?

DR. KISSINGER: Well, people who have once tasted high office find themselves very reluctant to leave it, except academicians, of course. I think there is a possibility of that. If the Communists succeed in taking a provincial capital and holding it in a reliable way, that Prince Sihanouk will come back with his provincial government. He will not be living in the style to which he had been accustomed in Phnom Penh, and he will have to adjust to a slightly different mode of operation, but I would suspect that he would come back.

Now we should not look at the problem of Sihanouk, however, entirely in terms of personalities. We recognize that Sihanouk was not a pro-Communist when he was thrown out of office, and we believe that he was attempting to steer a neutralist course by his life. The problem is, however, for better or worse, this revolution which we did not seek and which we did not encourage, has made it physically impossible for him to be anything other than the captive of the Communist forces which will be bringing him back.

When he was in power in Phnom Penh, he operated by a delicate balance of right wing and left wing forces, some of which he deliberately encouraged, sometimes leaning one way, sometimes leaning another way.

As I pointed out before, it is my personal judgment that at least part of the revolution against him was indirectly engineered by him in order to give himself bargaining power in Moscow and Peking and to be able to demonstrate that he had a right wing opposition that had to be placated and that only he could keep under control.

Whatever else happens, if Sihanouk comes back and whatever his intention, the forces that will be supporting him will all be Communist dominated and in the process of bringing him over, those forces which he had needed to balance the situation will have to be destroyed. This is an unavoidable fact of the situation.

So the Sihanouk who might be coming back, whatever his personal intentions or whatever the sincerity of his attitude, would be a different Sihanouk than the one who left office, primarily because the balance of forces on which he depends will have been altered.

Q Dr. Kissinger, before Sihanou was ousted, there was an arrangement in Cambodia by which the North Vietnamese limited their activities to a particular area, and we had learned to live with it.

Now, after Sihanouk was ousted this arrangement broke down. Without going into what caused the arrangement to break down, have we not precluded, by going into the sanctuaries, the possibility of re-establishing the arrangement by Sihanouk's successor or by Sihanouk himself if he came back, and in effect, given them a war to fight?

DR. KISSINGER: First of all, sometimes one has the impression we are living in a never-never land where we have to apologize for destroying supplies from which for years Americans have been killed. It was a heavy handicap on us to have these big supply depots established all along the Cambodian frontier. It is a handicap which we accepted because we thought that the neutrality of Cambodia might be a model of something that could happen all over the area.

There was an effort by Sihanouk, to this Administration at least, to squeeze the sanctuaries as much as possible, and his mission in Moscow and Peking was to attempt to negotiate to eliminate the sanctuaries.

To say that we had learned to live with them is to say that we had to accept a very heavy military handicap for the sake of respect for the neutrality of a country in an area where we wanted to maintain the neutrality.

Now, I know of no law that says that the North Vietnamese must be able to conduct a war in South Vietnam with American toleration. The solution to the problem is not to re-establish the sanctuaries in Cambodia. The solution of the problem is to conduct a serious, generous negotiation.

MORE

If you studied the President's speech of April 20, he made some very significant suggestions as to the nature of a political evolution in South Vietnam. We have always believed that the way to end the war in Vietnam is through negotiation.

Now Hanoi has a choice now. It can try to get back to the situation of a year ago or of six months ago, get its sanctuaries back. In the meantime, the South Vietnamese will be strengthened and another round of inconclusive war will start, or it may be conclusive war, or they can negotiate on the same terms we have offered before.

We are not raising our terms just because we think we have made some military progress. It is not going to be possible, partly for the reasons that I gave in answer to Dan Rather's question and partly for the fact that it is impossible to turn back history to return to the status quo of March 17.

From this point of view, that is true, but on the other hand there is a way out by means of negotiation, and I am sure that if they want to continue fighting, they will find some means of getting supplies into South Vietnam. We are not looking at this as a decisive thing.

Q Dr. Kissinger, that was half of my question. The other half is the global diplomatic efforts of this operation.

MORE

Q Can you assess not only the diplomatic effect on the talks, but also the global diplomatic efforts?

DR. KISSINGER: First on the talks, obviously we don't expect anything spectacular to happen while the military operations in Cambodia are still going on. But we hope and we are prepared that after this phase of military operations are completed that the other side will take a good, hard look at the situation and that it will conclude that the continuation of the war involves so many uncertainties and that a negotiation towards a peace, which is fair to all, is the best outcome.

We have said on innumerable occasions that we want a political solution in which all significant forces in South Vietnam are given an opportunity and that we want a future for South Vietnam in which the South Vietnamese people can express themselves.

Now, it should not be beyond the wit of man to come up with some formula which realizes this objective. Up to now the other side has asked for the whole political framework in effect to be turned over to them before negotiations even started. In other words, they wanted to prejudge the whole outcome. If they are really concerned with giving the people of South Vietnam an opportunity to express themselves they will find us prepared to talk to them with an open mind on the subject.

Q So we believe that if Hanoi is ever willing to talk seriously, then perhaps after the present excitement dies down, then during the summer they might re-evaluate their situation and talk in the spirit with which I have now sketched to you.

We have not raised our terms. We have no intention to humiliate them. We have no intention not to recognize that they have fought for a long period of time for their convictions and we would certainly attempt to implement by our best lights when we said the people of South Vietnam ought to be given an opportunity to shape their own fate.

Now, as for the global diplomatic consequences, as I pointed out last week, the immediate diplomatic consequences were about as we anticipated. The countries we thought would protest protested.

It has not led, up to now, to any permanent impairment or any serious diplomatic impairment of any of the countries with which we are dealing.

Again, the question we face is this: After the Cuban missile crisis, for example, contrary to all expectations, there began a period of major diplomatic contacts between the major nuclear powers, partly because the major nuclear powers had concluded that the danger of an unrestricted confrontation in that period was too great. That period led to the Nuclear Test Ban.

We are ready to talk seriously with any country that shares our own feeling that the exploitation of international tension and the continuation of some of these rivalries contains dangers that might prove to be unmanageable.

MORE

So, again, while undoubtedly the action in which we engaged had a temporarily unsettling effect, it may in the long run be a possible contribution. That is certainly the attitude with which we approach the future. We are not approaching it in a spirit of confrontation and heightening tension. We are approaching it with an attitude that we want to eliminate the causes of conflict and begin serious cooperation with all major countries.

Q What you have just said there about the analogy with the Cuban missile crisis, it seems to me, bears out what some of these official sources that you have talked about earlier have been saying, that what President Nixon wanted to do in this operation, really, was to convince the Soviet Union of our toughness and, as Secretary Laird said, the enemy was facing away and our danger in the Cambodian sanctuaries was less.

Was the Cambodian operation an attempt, really, to convince the Soviet Union of our toughness in hopes of tying it into the negotiations you mentioned here?

DR. KISSINGER: Secretary Laird said nothing else than what we said. To the extent that you are implying that we found ourselves in a nice, tranquil situation and hardly being able to restrain ourselves to get a little war going we said to ourselves, "Here are these North Vietnamese charging into Cambodia; let's smack them when the danger to us is eliminated," that is an absolutely incorrect conclusion which I will not accept. The reason we did what we did is the reason that was stated in the President's speech and in my backgrounder:

The North Vietnamese were expanding their sanctuaries for the purpose of magnifying their threat to South Vietnam; to give an opportunity to Vietnamization and to insure the withdrawal of our forces.

Obviously, if you want to show toughness to the Soviets you don't tackle the Vietnamese in Cambodia. There were no Soviet forces in Cambodia. There were no Soviet interests directly involved in Cambodia.

I want to say flatly that the intention of confronting the Soviet Union played no role whatever in our consideration. The purpose was not to produce a confrontation with the Soviet Union. The intention was not to trigger the Soviet Union into some concessions.

What I described to you was what could be a result and the result was precisely the unintended emergence in the crisis in the sense that nobody wanted Sihanouk overthrown and yet he was overthrown and that if the Soviet Union could have picked a place in which difficulties would arise with the United States, it would not have picked Cambodia any more than we would have picked Cambodia as a place for our military actions.

But I want to say flatly that confrontation with the Soviet Union, forcing the Soviet Union into a conciliatory posture, or any of these other phrases, had absolutely nothing to do with the decision in Cambodia which was taken entirely in terms of the local area.

Q To turn that coin over, there are now reports of a counterattack against some of our personnel in Cambodia, that they are beginning to stand and fight. Can you project what possible dangers we could foresee in the very near future there of a large-scale counterattack and possibly losing some of these large supplies that we have captured.

DR. KISSINGER: Well, the shock effect of our first move into Cambodia was so great that most of the Communist forces really ran and that there was practically no resistance for the first week. Now, some of the forces are seeping back into the area, launching attacks on our forces. Our judgment is that the purpose of these Communist attacks is to increase American casualties rather than to recapture the supplies.

We, of course, will do everything in our power to prevent the recapture of these supplies. We don't think that there is any major danger of our losing a significant portion of the supplies, but of course we are moving them out and destroying them as rapidly as we possibly can.

We also don't think that these attacks can amount to much more than harrassing tactics. They have a real problem in assembling major units and supplying them to fight Americans. And to the extent that they are fighting us their casualties go up and that again reduces the effectiveness of these main force units. So, they have a major problem.

Q You said we only had one goal in our move into Cambodia, but you admit that there were side effects, not only did you put the enemy on notice that we were unpredictable, but you also told the Soviet Union that; did we not?

DR. KISSINGER: Any action in international affairs that a major country like the United States takes has side effects. Obviously, what we did in Cambodia had an effect on the Soviet Union. I did not say that it did not have an effect on the Soviet Union. I said that the objective of the operation was not the Soviet Union and to the extent that the Soviet Union was affected, it was a price we were prepared to pay. But it was not one that we sought to pay.

On the question of predictability and unpredictability, if I can be philosophical for a moment, this is a very serious decision to make. On some levels one wants to be predictable and on most levels one wants to be predictable. But if the other side gets the idea -- and here I am talking particularly about Hanoi -- gets the idea that our actions cannot possibly be affected by anything they do, that they can set quotas of American casualties and slowly bleed us, then their planning becomes very easy and the pressure on us becomes greater and greater.

So, I would say that unpredictability should be kept at a minimum, but it is not always harmful that if pushed too far this is not true. This was not the intention because the Soviet Union was not pushing us in Cambodia.

MR. ZIEGLER: In relation to the implication of your question, while the backgrounder was underway, Mr. Deakin, we checked with the Secretary of Defense and in no way whatsoever did the Secretary of Defense make a statement that would imply the operations into the Cambodian sanctuaries were conducted for any other purpose or under any other set of circumstances other than what we had previously discussed many times.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

AT 10:20 A.M. EDT)