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Report on the Cambodian Operation.

June 30, 1970

TOGETHER with the South Vietnamese, the Armed Forces of the United States have just completed successfully the destruction of enemy base areas along the Cambodian-South Vietnam frontier. All American troops have withdrawn from Cambodia on the schedule announced at the start of the operation.

The allied sweeps into the North Vietnamese and Vietcong base areas along the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border:

- will save American and allied lives in the future;
- will assure that the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam can proceed on schedule;
- will enable our program of Vietnamization to continue on its current timetable;
- should enhance the prospects for a just peace.

At this time, it is important to review the background for the decision, the results of the operation, their larger meaning in terms of the conflict in Indochina-and to look down the road to the future.

It is vital to understand at the outset that Hanoi left the United States no reasonable option but to move militarily against the Cambodian base areas. The purpose and significance of our operations against the Cambodian sanctuaries can only be understood against the backdrop of what we are seeking to accomplish in Vietnam--and the threat that the Communist bases in Cambodia posed to our objectives. Nor can that military action of the last 2 months be divorced from its cause--the threat posed by the constant expansion of North Vietnamese aggression throughout Indochina.

A RECORD OF RESTRAINT

America's purpose in Vietnam and Indochina remains what it has been--a peace in which the peoples of the region can devote themselves to development of their own societies, a peace in which all the peoples of Southeast Asia can determine their own political future without outside interference.

When this administration took office, the authorized strength of American troops in South Vietnam was 549,500 the high water mark of American military presence in Southeast Asia. The United States had been negotiating at Paris for 10 months but nothing had been agreed upon other than the shape of the bargaining table. No comprehensive allied peace proposal existed. There was no approved plan to reduce America's involvement in the war--in the absence of a negotiated settlement.

Since January of 1969, we have taken steps on all fronts to move toward peace. Along with the Government of South Vietnam, we have put forward a number of concrete and reasonable proposals to promote genuine negotiations. These proposals were first outlined by me 13 months ago on May 14, 1969 and by President Thieu on July 11, 1969. Through both public and private channels, our proposals have been repeated and amplified many times since.

These proposals are designed to secure the removal of all foreign military forces from South Vietnam and to establish conditions in which all political forces can compete freely and fairly in the future of the country. Our principal goal has been to enable the people of South Vietnam to determine their future free of outside interference.

To indicate our good faith, to improve the climate for negotiations, we changed the orders to our commanders in South Vietnam. This has helped to reduce casualties. We have cut tactical air operations in South Vietnam by more than 20 percent. We initiated a troop withdrawal program which, during the course of next spring, will bring American troop strength 265,000 men below the level authorized when this administration took office.

These are not the actions of a government pursuing a military solution. They are the decisions of a government seeking a just peace at the conference table.

But Hanoi has ignored our unilateral gestures and rejected every offer of serious negotiations. Instead it has insisted that--as a precondition to talks--we pledge unconditionally to withdraw all American forces from South Vietnam and to overthrow the elected government.

These proposals are not a basis for negotiation; they are a demand for surrender. For the United States to accept these conditions would make the negotiations meaningless. Acceptance of such conditions would assure in advance Communist domination of South Vietnam.

With Hanoi's intransigence on the negotiating front, this administration was faced with essentially three options.

We could have continued the maximum existing level of American involvement in Vietnam. But this was incompatible with the Nixon Doctrine of increasing responsibilities for the Asian countries; and it was unacceptable to the American people.

We could have begun the immediate withdrawal of all our forces. We rejected this course of capitulation which would have only won temporary respite at the price of graver crises later. We also rejected that course as both incompatible with America's commitments and tradition, and disastrous in terms of its long-range consequences for peace in the Pacific and peace in the world.

We selected instead a third option--that of gradually shifting the total combat burden to the South Vietnamese.

Since the beginning of this administration 17 months ago, it has been our policy to train and equip the South Vietnamese to take over the burden of their own defense from American troops. Even in the absence

of progress at the peace table in Paris, and despite continued enemy pressures in South Vietnam, this policy of "Vietnamization" has permitted us to carry out repeated withdrawals of American troops.

As our policy has been tested, more and more Americans have been brought home. By June of 1969, we could announce the pullout of 25,000 American troops. They came home. In September of 1969, we announced the withdrawal of an additional 35,000 American troops. They came home.

In December of 1969, we announced the withdrawal of 50,000 more American troops. They were home by spring of this year. On April 20, I announced the forthcoming withdrawal of an additional 150,000 Americans to be completed during next spring--50,000 of them will be home or on their way home by the 15th of October.

A POLICY IN TRANSITION

This transfer of primary responsibility for self-defense from American forces to Asian forces reflects our approach to foreign policy. Increasingly, the United States will look to the countries of the region to assume the primary responsibility for their own security--while America moves gradually from a leading to a supporting role.

To be successful this policy requires the striking of a careful balance--whether in South Vietnam or elsewhere in Asia. While the growing strength of our allies and the growing measure of their regional cooperation allows for a reduction in American presence, they could not survive a sudden and precipitous American withdrawal from our responsibilities. This would lead to a collapse of local strength in the transition period between the old era of principal U.S. involvement to the new era of partnership and emphasis on local and regional cooperation.

Doing too much for an allied people can delay their political maturity, promote a sense of dependency, and diminish that nation's incentive to stand on its own feet. But doing too little for an ally can induce a sense of despair, endanger their right of self-determination and invite their defeat when confronted by an aggressor.

As we have proceeded with Vietnamization it has been with these principles in mind.

Looking at American policy in Vietnam these 17 months, this administration-in the generosity of its negotiating offers, in the limitations on its military actions, and in the consistency of its troop withdrawals has written a record of restraint. The response from the enemy over those same 17 months has been intransigence in Paris, belligerence from Hanoi, and escalation of the war throughout Indochina.

Enemy attacks in Vietnam increased during April.

This past winter Hanoi launched a major offensive against the legitimate government of Laos which they themselves had helped to establish under the 1962 Geneva accords. For years, in violation of those accords, North Vietnamese troops have occupied Laotian territory and used its eastern regions as a highway for the export of aggression into South Vietnam.

In March and April of this year, Communist troops used their long held bases in Cambodia to move against the Government of Cambodia in a way which increased the long-term threat to allied forces in South Vietnam as well as to the future of our Vietnamization and withdrawal programs. These new violations, too, took place against a backdrop of years of Communist disregard of the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia-guaranteed in the 1954 Geneva agreements to which Hanoi was a signatory.

BACKGROUND OF THE APRIL 30 DECISION

In assessing the April 30 decision to move against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong sanctuaries in Cambodia, four basic facts must be remembered.

It was North Vietnam--not we--which brought the Vietnam War into Cambodia.

For 5 years, North Vietnam has used Cambodian territory as a sanctuary from which to attack allied forces in South Vietnam. For 5 years, American and allied forces--to preserve the concept of Cambodian neutrality and to confine the conflict in Southeast Asia--refrained from moving against those sanctuaries.

It was the presence of North Vietnamese troops on Cambodian soil that contributed to the downfall of Prince Sihanouk. It was the indignation of the Cambodian people against the presence of Vietnamese Communists in their country that led to riots in Phnom Penh which contributed to Prince Sihanouk's ouster--an ouster that surprised no nation more than the United States. At the end of Sihanouk's rule, the United States was making efforts to improve relations with his government and the Prince was taking steps against the Communist invaders on his national soil.

It was the government appointed by Prince Sihanouk and ratified by the Cambodian National Assembly--not a group of usurpers--which overthrew him with the approval of the National Assembly. The United States had neither connection with, nor knowledge of, these events.

It was the major expansion of enemy activity in Cambodia that ultimately caused allied troops to end 5 years of restraint and attack the Communist base areas.

The historical record is plain.

Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops have operated in Eastern Cambodia for years. The primary objective of these Communist forces has been the support of Hanoi's aggression against South Vietnam. Just as it has violated the 1962 Geneva Accords on Laos, North Vietnam has consistently ignored its pledge, in signing the 1954 Geneva Accords, to respect Cambodian neutrality and territorial integrity.

In a May 1967 Phnom Penh radio broadcast, Prince Sihanouk's following remarks were reported to the Cambodia people:

"I must tell you that the Vietnamese communists and the Vietcong negotiated with us three or four times but that absolutely nothing comes out of the negotiations... After I expelled the French and after the French troops left Cambodia, Viet Minh¹ remained in our country in order to conquer it. How can we have confidence in the Viet Minh? ... If we side with the Viet Minh we will lose our independence."

¹A Communist-led national coalition of 'Vietnamese fighting within Cambodia against the French during the early fifties.

Late in 1969, Prince Sihanouk ordered Cambodia's underequipped and weak armed forces to exercise some measure of control over North Vietnamese and Vietcong Communist forces occupying Cambodian

territory.

At the same time, the Communist forces were actively preparing in their base areas for new combat in South Vietnam. These areas---on the Cambodian side of the Vietnam-Cambodian border have for years served as supply depots and base camps for enemy troops infiltrated through Laos into South Vietnam. They have also served as sanctuaries for North Vietnamese and Vietcong headquarters elements and for combat troops to rest, refit, and resupply on their return from South Vietnam.

Our screening of more than six tons of documents captured in the Cambodian operations has provided conclusive proof of Communist reliance on Cambodia as a logistic and infiltration corridor and as a secure area from which Communist designs on Vietnam as well as in Cambodia itself could be carried out.

On January 6, 1970, Prince Sihanouk departed on vacation in France. His Prime Minister, Lon Nol, and Deputy Prime Minister, Sirik Matak, were left in charge. In early March, with Sihanouk still in power, there were public demonstrations, first in the eastern provinces of Cambodia and later in Phnom Penh, against flagrant North Vietnamese violation of Cambodia's territorial integrity.

On March 13, Prince Sihanouk left Paris for Moscow and Peking, avowedly to seek Soviet and Chinese assistance in persuading the Vietnamese Communists to reduce the presence of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in Cambodia.

Then, on March 18, the Cambodian National Assembly by unanimous vote declared that Prince Sihanouk was no longer Chief of State. Cheng Heng was retained as Acting Chief of State. Lon Nol and Sirik Matak kept their positions. Reasons for Sihanouk's ouster included growing objections to his mishandling of the economy and to his bypassing of the Cabinet and National Assembly; but resentment over North Vietnam's flagrant misuse of Cambodian territory certainly contributed. Sihanouk arrived in Peking the same day and met with the Peking leadership as well as with the North Vietnamese Prime Minister who had hastened to Peking to greet him. Thereafter Sihanouk has increasingly identified himself with the Communist cause in Indochina.

This Government had no advance warning of the ouster of Sihanouk, with whom we had been attempting to improve relations. Our initial response was to seek to preserve the status quo with regard to Cambodia and to try to prevent an expansion of Communist influence. The immunity of the Cambodian sanctuaries had been a serious military handicap for us for many years. But we had refrained from moving against them in order to contain the conflict. We recognized both the problems facing Sihanouk and the fact that he had exercised some measure of control over Communist activities, through regulation of the flow of rice and military supplies into the sanctuaries from coastal ports. We considered that a neutral Cambodia outweighed the military benefits of a move against the base areas.

This is why diplomatically our first reaction to Sihanouk's overthrow was to encourage some form of accommodation in Cambodia. We spoke in this sense to interested governments. And we made clear through many channels that we had no intention of exploiting the Cambodian upheaval for our own ends.

These attempts ran afoul of Hanoi's designs. North Vietnam and the Vietcong withdrew their representation from Phnom Penh. North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces began to expand their base areas along the border.

By April 3, they were beginning to launch attacks against Cambodian forces in Svay Rieng Province. Later these attacks were extended to other outposts in Eastern Cambodia, forcing Cambodian troops to evacuate border positions in the Parrot's Beak area by April 10. Communist attacks were also directed against Mekong River traffic.

By April 16, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops began to launch isolated attacks deep into Cambodia including an attack on the capital of Takeo Province south of Phnom Penh.

Despite escalating Communist activity in Cambodia, we continued to exercise restraint. Though the implications of the Communist actions for our efforts in Vietnam were becoming increasingly ominous, Communist intentions in Cambodia were still not absolutely clear. The military moves by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong in Cambodia could still be interpreted as temporary actions to secure their base camps in light of the uncertainties following Sihanouk's removal.

When I made my April 10 speech announcing the withdrawal of 150,000 troops over the next year, I knew that we might be at a crossroads in Cambodia. I nevertheless made the announcement because it would leave no doubt about our intention to deescalate the conflict.

I also used the occasion to restate very forthcoming political principles for a negotiated peace. At the same time I described the pattern of North Vietnamese aggression in Indochina, and acknowledged that my withdrawal decision involved some risks when viewed against this enemy escalation. I therefore reiterated my determination to take strong and effective measures if increased enemy action in Laos, Cambodia, or South Vietnam jeopardized the security of our remaining forces in Vietnam.

Within days of my April 20 speech, Communist intentions became painfully and unambiguously clear. In the face of our restraint and our warnings, the North Vietnamese continued to expand their territorial control, threatening to link up their base areas. From a series of isolated enclaves, the base areas were rapidly becoming a solid band of self-sustaining territory stretching from Laos to the sea from which any pretense of Cambodian sovereignty was rapidly being excluded.

--On April 20, North Vietnamese forces temporarily captured Saang, only 18 miles south of Phnom Penh.

--On April 22, Communist forces assaulted the town of Snuol east of Phnom Penh.

--On April 23, they attacked the town of Mimot and an important bridge linking the town of Snuol and the capital of Kratie Province on Route 13

--On April 24, they moved on the resort city of Kep.

--On April 26, they attacked some ships on the Mekong and occupied the town of Angtassom, a few miles west of Takeo.

--They then attacked the city of Chhlong, on the Mekong River north of Phnom Penh, and the port city of Kampot.

--During this same period, they cut almost every major road leading south and east out of Phnom Penh.

The prospect suddenly loomed of Cambodia's becoming virtually one

large base area for attack anywhere into South Vietnam along the 600 miles of the Cambodian frontier. The enemy in Cambodia would have enjoyed complete freedom of action to move forces and supplies rapidly across the entire length of South Vietnam's flank to attack our forces in South Vietnam with impunity from well-stocked sanctuaries along the border.

We thus faced a rapidly changing military situation from that which existed on April 20.

The possibility of a grave new threat to our troops in South Vietnam was rapidly becoming an actuality.

This pattern of Communist action prior to our decision of April 30 makes it clear the enemy was intent both on expanding and strengthening its military position along the Cambodian border and overthrowing the Cambodian Government. The plans were laid, the orders issued, and already being implemented by Communist forces.

Not only the clear evidence of Communist actions but supporting data screened from more than 6 tons of subsequently captured Communist documents leaves no doubt that the Communists' move against the Cambodian Government preceded the U.S. action against the base areas.

THREE OPTIONS

On April 30, before announcing our response, I outlined the three basic choices we had in the face of the expanding Communist threat.

First, we could do nothing. This would have eroded an important restraint on the loss of American lives. It would have run the risk of Cambodia's becoming one vast enemy staging area, a springboard for attacks on South Vietnam without fear of retaliation. The dangers of having done nothing would not have fully materialized for several months and this government might have been commended for exercising restraint. But, as withdrawals proceeded, our paralysis would have seriously jeopardized our forces in Vietnam and would have led to longer lists of American casualties. The United States could not accept the consequences of inaction in the face of this enemy escalation. The American men remaining in South Vietnam after our withdrawal of 150,000 would have been in severe jeopardy.

Our second choice was to provide massive assistance to Cambodia. This was an unrealistic alternative. The small Cambodian army of 30,000 could not effectively utilize any massive transfusion of military assistance against the immediate enemy threat. We also did not wish to get drawn into the permanent direct defense of Cambodia. This would have been inconsistent with the basic premises of our foreign policy.

After intensive consultations with my top advisers, I chose the third course. With the South Vietnamese, we launched joint attacks against the base areas so long occupied by Communist forces.

Our military objectives were to capture or destroy the arms, ammunition, and supplies that had been built up in those sanctuaries over a period of years and to disrupt the enemy's communication network. At the least, this would frustrate the impact of any Communist success in linking up their base areas if it did not prevent this development altogether.

I concluded that, regardless of the success of Communist assaults on the Cambodian Government, the destruction of the enemy's sanctuaries would:

- remove a grave potential threat to our remaining men in South Vietnam, and so reduce future American casualties.

- give added assurance of the continuance of our troop withdrawal program.

- insure the timetable for our Vietnamization program.

- increase the chances of shortening the war in South Vietnam.

- enhance the prospects of a negotiated peace.

- emphasize to the enemy whether in Southeast Asia or elsewhere that the word of the United States--whether given in a promise or a warning--was still good.

THE MILITARY OPERATIONS

Ten major operations were launched against a dozen of the most significant base areas with 32,000 American troops and 48,000 South Vietnamese participating at various times. As of today, all Americans,

including logistics personnel and advisers, have withdrawn, as have a majority of the South Vietnamese forces.

Our military response to the enemy's escalation was measured in every respect. It was a limited operation for a limited period of time with limited objectives.

We have scrupulously observed the 21-mile limit on penetration of our ground combat forces into Cambodian territory. These self-imposed time and geographic restrictions may have cost us some military advantages, but we knew that we could achieve our primary objectives within these restraints. And these restraints underscored the limited nature of our purpose to the American people.

My June 3 interim report pointed up the success of these operations and the massive amounts of supplies we were seizing and destroying. We have since added substantially to these totals. A full inventory is attached as an appendix to the report ² Here are some highlights.

² The inventory is printed in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (vol. 6, p. 856).

According to latest estimates from the field, we have captured:

--22,892 individual weapons--enough to equip about 74 full-strength North Vietnamese infantry battalions, and 2,509 big crew-served weapons--enough to equip about 25 full-strength North Vietnamese infantry battalions;

--More than 15 million rounds of ammunition or about what the enemy has fired in South Vietnam during the past year;

--14 million pounds of rice, enough to feed all the enemy combat battalions estimated to be in South Vietnam for about 4 months;

--143,000 rockets, mortars, and recoil. less rifle rounds, used against cities and bases. Based on recent experience, the number of mortars, large rockets, and recoilless rifle rounds is equivalent to what the enemy shoots in about 14 months in South Vietnam;

--Over 199,552 anti-aircraft rounds, 5,482 mines, 62,022 grenades, and 83,000 pounds of explosives, including 1,002 satchel charges;

--Over 435 vehicles and destroyed over 11,688 bunkers and other military structures.

And while our objective has been supplies rather than personnel, the enemy has also taken a heavy manpower loss--11,349 men killed and about 2,328 captured and detainees.

These are impressive statistics. But what is the deeper meaning of the piles of enemy supplies and the rubble of enemy installations?

We have eliminated an immediate threat to our forces and to the security of South Vietnam--and produced the prospect of fewer American casualties in the future.

We have inflicted extensive casualties and very heavy losses in material on the enemy--losses which can now be replaced only from the North during a monsoon season and in the face of counteraction by South Vietnamese ground and U.S. air forces.

We have ended the concept of Cambodian sanctuaries, immune from attack, upon which the enemy military had relied for 5 years.

We have dislocated supply lines and disrupted Hanoi's strategy in the Saigon area and the Mekong Delta. The enemy capacity to mount a major offensive in this vital populated region of the South has been greatly diminished.

We have effectively cut off the enemy from resupply by the sea. In 1969, well over half of the munitions being delivered to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong in Cambodia came by sea.

We have, for the time being, separated the Communist main force units--regular troops organized in formal units similar to conventional armies--from the guerrillas in the southern part of Vietnam. This should provide a boost to pacification efforts.

We have guaranteed the continuance of our troop withdrawal program. On June 3, I reaffirmed that 150,000 more Americans would return home within a year and announced that 50,000 would leave Vietnam by October 15.

We have bought time for the South Vietnamese to strengthen themselves against the enemy.

We have witnessed visible proof of the success of Vietnamization as the South Vietnamese performed with skill and valor and competence far beyond the expectation of our commanders or American advisers. The morale and self-confidence of the Army of South Vietnam is higher than ever before.

These then are the major accomplishments of the operations against the Cambodian base areas. Americans can take pride in the leadership of General Abrams and in the competence and dedication of our forces.

There is another way to view the success of these operations. What if we had chosen the first option--and done nothing?

The enemy sanctuaries by now would have been expanded and strengthened. The thousands of troops he lost, in killed or captured, would be available to attack American positions and with the enormous resources that we captured or destroyed still in his hands.

Our Vietnamization program would be in serious jeopardy; our withdrawals of troops could only have been carried out in the face of serious threat to our remaining troops in Vietnam.

We would have confronted an adversary emboldened by our timidity, an adversary who had ignored repeated warnings.

The war would be a good deal further from over than it is today.

Had we stood by and let the enemy act with impunity in Cambodia, we would be facing a truly bleak situation.

The allied operations have greatly reduced these risks and enhanced the prospects for the future. However, many difficulties remain and some setbacks are inevitable. We still face substantial problems, but the Cambodian operations will enable us to pursue our goals with greater confidence.

When the decision to go into Cambodia was announced on April 30, we anticipated broad disagreement and dissent within the society. Given the divisions on this issue among the American people, it could not have been otherwise.

But the majority of the Americans supported that decision and, now that the Cambodian operation is over, I believe there is a wide measure of understanding of the necessity for it.

Although there remains disagreement about its long-term significance, about the cost to our society of having taken this action--there can be little disagreement now over the immediate military success that has been achieved. With American ground operations in Cambodia ended, we shall move forward with our plan to end the war in Vietnam and to secure the just peace on which all Americans are united.

THE FUTURE

Now that our ground forces and our logistic and advisory personnel have all been withdrawn, what will be our future policy for Cambodia?

The following will be the guidelines of our policy in Cambodia:

1. There will be no U.S. ground personnel in Cambodia except for the regular staff of our Embassy in Phnom Penh.
2. There will be no U.S. advisers with Cambodian units.
3. We will conduct--with the approval of the Cambodian Government--air interdiction missions against the enemy efforts to move supplies and personnel through Cambodia toward South Vietnam and to reestablish base areas relevant to the war in Vietnam. We do this to protect our forces in South Vietnam.
4. We will turn over material captured in the base areas in Cambodia to the Cambodian Government to help it defend its neutrality and independence.
5. We will provide military assistance to the Cambodian Government in the form of small arms and relatively unsophisticated equipment in types and quantities suitable for their army. To date we have supplied about \$5 million of these items principally in the form of small arms, mortars, trucks, aircraft parts, communications equipment, and medical supplies.
6. We will encourage other countries of the region to give diplomatic support to the independence and neutrality of Cambodia. We welcome the efforts of the Djakarta group of countries* to mobilize world opinion

and encourage Asian cooperation to this end.

*Representatives of Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, The Philippines, Singapore, South Vietnam, and Thailand comprised the Djakarta Conference of Foreign Ministers.

7. We will encourage and support the efforts of third countries who wish to furnish Cambodia with troops or material. We applaud the efforts of Asian nations to help Cambodia preserve its neutrality and independence.

I will let the Asian Governments speak for themselves concerning their future policies. I am confident that two basic principles will govern the actions of those nations helping Cambodia:

--They will be at the request of, and in close concert with the Cambodian Government.

--They will not be at the expense of those nations' own defense---indeed they will contribute to their security which they see bound up with events in Cambodia.

The South Vietnamese plan to help. Of all the countries of Southeast Asia, South Vietnam has most at stake in Cambodia. A North Vietnamese takeover would, of course, have profound consequences for its security. At the same time, the leaders of South Vietnam recognize that the primary focus of their attention must be on the security of their own country. President Thieu has reflected these convictions in his major radio and TV address of June 27. Our understanding of Saigon's intentions is as follows:

1. South Vietnamese forces remain ready to prevent reestablishment of base areas along South Vietnam's frontier.

2. South Vietnamese forces will remain ready to assist in the evacuation of Vietnamese civilians and to respond selectively to appeals from the Cambodian Government should North Vietnamese aggression make this necessary.

3. Most of these operations will be launched from within South Vietnam. There will be no U.S. air or logistics support. There will not be U.S. advisers on these operations.

4. The great majority of South Vietnamese forces are to leave Cambodia.

5. The primary objective of the South Vietnamese remains Vietnamization within their country. Whatever actions are taken in Cambodia will be consistent with this objective.

In this June 27 speech President Thieu emphasized that his government will concentrate on efforts within South Vietnam. He pledged that his country will always respect the territory, borders, independence, and neutrality of Cambodia and will not interfere in its internal politics. His government does not advocate stationing troops permanently in Cambodia or sending the South Vietnamese Army to fight the war for the Cambodian Army.

Under the foreign policy guidelines first outlined at Guam a year ago, I stressed that a threatened country should first make maximum efforts in its own self-defense. The Cambodian people and soldiers are doing that against the superior force of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong invaders. The majority of the Cambodian people support the present government against the foreign intruders. Cambodian troops have remained loyal and have stood up well in the face of great pressures from a better-armed and experienced foe.

Secondly, our policy stresses there should be regional cooperation where a country is not strong enough to defend herself. Cambodia's neighbors are providing that cooperation by joining with her in a collective effort. Each of them is a target of Communist aggression; each has a stake in Cambodia's neutrality and independence.

Third, the U.S. will assist such self-help and regional actions where our participation can make a difference. Over the long term, we expect the countries of Asia to provide increasingly for their own defense. However, we are now in a transitional phase when nations are shouldering greater responsibilities but when U.S. involvement, while declining, still plays an important role.

In this interim period, we must offset our lower direct involvement with increased military and economic assistance. To meet our foreign policy obligations while reducing our presence will require a redirection--both quantitatively and qualitatively--in our assistance programs.

Prince Sihanouk wrote in December 1969 about the Communist threat to his country and the balance presented by American forces in Southeast Asia. In a generally anti-American article in the official Cambodian Government Party newspaper he stated:

"On the diplomatic and political plane, the fact that the U.S. remains in our region and does not yet leave it allows us maneuverings to assure on the one hand our more than honorable presence in the concert of nations this presence (and this is an irony of fate for the anti-imperialists that we are) is an essential condition for the 'respect,' the 'friendship' and even for the aid of our socialist 'friends.' When the U.S. has left these regions, it is certain that the Cambodia of the Sangkum³ will be the objective of the shellings of the heavy Communist guns: unfriendliness, subversion, aggressions, infiltrations and even occupations."

³ The Sangkum Reastr Niyum, or People's Socialist Community, a political unification movement founded by Prince Sihanouk on March 24, 1955.

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

In our search for a lasting peace in Southeast Asia, we are applying the three basic principles of our foreign policy which are set forth in the Foreign Policy Report to Congress last February: partnership, strength and willingness to negotiate.

--The partnership of our Vietnamization program and of our support for regional defense efforts.

--The strength of our action against the Communist bases in Cambodia and the steadfastness of the American people to see the war through to an honorable conclusion.

--The willingness to negotiate expressed in our generous proposals for a settlement and in our flexibility once Hanoi agrees to serious negotiations.

All three elements are needed to bring peace in Southeast Asia. The willingness to negotiate will prove empty unless buttressed by the willingness to stand by just demands. Otherwise negotiations will be a subterfuge for capitulation. This would only bring a false and transitory peace abroad and recrimination at home.

While we search for genuine negotiation we must continue to demonstrate resolution both abroad and at home and we must support the common defense efforts of threatened Asian nations.

To the leaders in Hanoi, I say the time has come to negotiate. There is nothing to be gained in waiting. There is never an ideal moment when both sides are in perfect equilibrium.

The lesson of the last 2 months has reinforced the lessons of the last 2 years-the time has come to negotiate a just peace.

In Cambodia, the futility of expanded aggression has been demonstrated. By its actions in Cambodia, North Vietnam and the Vietcong provoked the destruction of their sanctuaries and helped to weld together the independent states of Southeast Asia in a collective defense effort which will receive American support.

The other side cannot impose its will through military means. We have no intention of imposing ours. We have not raised the terms for a settlement as a result of our recent military successes. We will not lower our minimum terms in response to enemy pressure. Our objective remains a negotiated peace with justice for both sides and which gives the people of South Vietnam the opportunity to shape their own future.

With major efforts the North Vietnamese can perhaps rebuild or readjust Cambodia supply areas over a period of months. They can pursue their war against South Vietnam and her neighbors. But what end would a new round of conflict serve? There is no military solution to this conflict. Sooner or later, peace must come. It can come now, through a negotiated settlement that is fair to both sides and humiliates neither. Or it can come months or years from now, with both sides having paid the further price of protracted struggle.

We would hope that Hanoi would ponder seriously its choice, considering both the promise of an honorable peace and the costs of continued war.

We repeat: all our previous proposals, public and private, remain on the conference table to be explored, including the principles of a just political settlement that I outlined on April 20.

We search for a political solution that reflects the will of the South Vietnamese people, and allows them to determine their future without outside interference.

We recognize that a fair political solution should reflect the existing relationship of political forces.

We pledge to abide by the outcome of the political process agreed upon by the South Vietnamese.

For our part, we shall renew our efforts to bring about genuine negotiations both in Paris and for all of Indochina. As I said in my address last September to the United Nations General Assembly:

"The people of Vietnam, North, and South alike, have demonstrated heroism enough to last a century The people of Vietnam, North and South, have endured an unspeakable weight of suffering for a generation. And they deserve a better future."

We call on Hanoi to join us at long last in bringing about that better future.

Note: The report was released at San Clemente, Calif.

On the same day, the White House released a summary of the report which is printed in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (vol. 6, p. 841).

Previously, on June 10, 1970, the White House released the transcript of a news briefing by Governors John A. Love of Colorado, Raymond P. Sharer of Pennsylvania, and Robert E. McNair of South Carolina; Senators Howard W. Cannon of Nevada and Thomas J. McIntyre of New Hampshire; Representative Melvin Price of Illinois; and Herbert G. Klein, Director of Communications for the Executive Branch, following a report to the President on their fact-finding trip to South Vietnam and Cambodia. Their 7-page report on the trip from June 5 through June 8, was made available to the press following the briefing.

Richard Nixon, Report on the Cambodian Operation. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239966>