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NIXON SENDS COMBAT UNITS INTO CAMBODIA TO ATTACK COMMUNIST STAGING AREA



Associated Press

American adviser on a South Vietnamese troop carrier near Chipou, Cambodia, yesterday

'NOT AN INVASION'

President Terms It Extension of War to Save G.I. Lives

The text of Nixon's speech is printed on Page 2. →

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 30—In a sharp departure from the previous conduct of war in South-east Asia, President Nixon announced tonight that he was sending United States combat troops into Cambodia for the first time.

White House sources indicated that even as the President was addressing the nation on television, several thousand American soldiers were moving across the border from South Vietnam to Cambodia to attack what Mr. Nixon described as "the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam."

Th President expects the operation to last six weeks to two months.

The area was described by sources here as the Fishhook area of Cambodia, some 50 miles northwest of Saigon.

War Area Extended

The President described the action as "not an invasion of Cambodia" but a necessary extension of the Vietnam war designed to eliminate a major Communist staging and communications area. Thus it is intended to protect the lives of American troops and shorten the war.

The President further described the action as "indispensable" for the continued success of his program of Vietnamization—under which he has been withdrawing American ground combat troops as the burden of fighting is gradually shifted to the South Vietnamese.

The President's rhetoric was tough—probably the toughest of his tenure in office—and was reminiscent of some of the speeches of Lydon B. Johnson during the last years of his term as President.

"This action puts the leaders of North Vietnam on notice," he said, "that we will be patient in working for peace, we will be conciliatory at the conference table, but, we will not be humiliated. We will not be defeated. We will not allow American men by the thousands to be killed by an enemy from privileged sanctuaries."

Beyond that, he portrayed his

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Nixon, on Television, Explains Decision to Act on Cambodia

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decision as a difficult one taken without regard to his own political future, which he said was "nothing compared to the lives" of American soldiers. Furthermore, he said, he regarded the recent actions of the North Vietnamese as a test of American credibility requiring firm response.

Mr. Nixon's address came as Washington was still trying to digest the Defense Department's announcement yesterday that the United States had agreed to provide combat advisers, tactical air support and other forms of assistance to South Vietnamese troops attacking Communist bases in Cambodia.

The South Vietnamese offensive, involving thousands of troops, began yesterday morning and provoked widespread surprise, anger and frustration on Capitol Hill, mixed with quick expressions of support from some of the President's Congressional allies.

Many legislators, particularly Senators with a long history of opposition to the Vietnam war, saw the Cambodian action as a dangerous expansion of the conflict and a prelude to American involvement in still another Southeast Asian nation.

Informed sources reported that more than 1,200 telegrams arrived at the White House last night after the new operation in Cambodia had been announced—an unusually large number on an issue on which the President himself had not yet made a public statement.

There was no indication of the tenor of these messages but a recent Gallup Poll indicated that public approval of

Mr. Nixon's Vietnam policies had dropped from a high of 65 per cent in January to 48 per cent in early April. Therefore tonight's address was regarded in the White House as having considerable political as well as diplomatic significance.

After the Defense Department announcement yesterday, Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, began drafting legislation that would preclude use of any funds appropriated by Congress for military assistance or operations in Cambodia. This would be attached as an amendment to a military sales bill now before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Some of the critics of yesterday's move—including Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Senate majority leader—were among a dozen or so Congressional leaders from both parties who gathered at the White House at 8 P.M., one hour before the President was scheduled to go on the air, for an advance briefing from Mr. Nixon in the Cabinet room adjacent to the Oval Room, the President's office. Members of the Cabinet also attended.

During the briefing, Mr. Nixon was said to have summarized the speech and to have set forth the Administration's rationale for the decision to authorize American participation in the South Vietnamese offensive against areas that have served as sanctuaries for Communist forces on the Cambodian side of the border.

The main justification for the move offered yesterday and again this morning, in public statements and private conver-

sations, was that North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops operating from Cambodia had posed an "increasing threat" to the lives of American servicemen in South Vietnam and, more broadly, to the Vietnamization program. Under this program the Nixon Administration is seeking to disengage itself from the conflict by turning over the main combat burden to the South Vietnamese.

The offensive, Daniel Z. Henkin, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, declared at a briefing yesterday, "is a necessary and effective measure to save American and other free-world lives and to strengthen the Vietnamization program."

In private, officials conceded that Mr. Nixon had deliberately chosen to widen the conflict—temporarily, they said—in an effort to bring it to an end more quickly.

Top Aides Visit Capitol

This was essentially the approach taken by Administration officials who circulated on Capitol Hill today explaining the Administration's point of view. Both the Under Secretary of State, Elliot L. Richardson, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, David Packard, were dispatched to the Capitol to brief Republican Senators on Mr. Nixon's reasoning.

It was emphasized that the joint South Vietnamese-United States operation on Cambodian territory should not be construed, as Mr. Nixon's answer to the request made by Premier Lon Nol of Cambodia for military aid.

This distinction has been drawn carefully and emphatically in nearly every utterance on the Cambodian situation by

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary. This apparently reflects an effort to persuade newsmen that the operation in Cambodia is no more than an extension of the Vietnam operation and does not represent a commitment of United States manpower to the Government of Cambodia.

More than three weeks ago Lieut. Gen. Lon Nol appealed to the United States, along with other countries, to provide weapons for an expansion of his 35,000-man army to about 200,000 men. As an interim measure, Washington agreed last week to supply several thousand captured AK-47 automatic rifles of Soviet design and Chinese manufacture, through the South Vietnamese.

President Worked Late

Mr. Ziegler said Mr. Nixon had worked until after midnight at the White House last night and appeared in his auxiliary office in the Executive Office Building, across West Executive Avenue from the White House, shortly after 9 A.M.

There he stayed for most of the day, conferring with Henry A. Kissinger, his adviser on national security affairs, members of the National Security Council, other staff members and presumably one or two of his speechwriters.

Mr. Ziegler said that Mr. Nixon had not conferred with the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the last two days. But he has had almost continuous discussion all week with Mr. Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and Secretary of State William P. Rogers, debating the risks and opportunities presented by alternative courses of action in Cambodia.

* BY DEFENSE DEPT