

# White House Statement

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15—

Following is the text of a White House statement on Cambodia that was read at a news conference today by Gerald L. Warren, deputy press secretary:

As you know, combat air operations by United States aircraft have ceased in Cambodia. In order clearly to explain our position concerning this action and to avoid any misunderstanding by others, I would like to make the following points:

As the President indicated in his letter to Congressional leaders on Aug. 3, this Administration is terminating combat activity in Cambodia in compliance with a specific, direct and binding instruction from the Congress.

The President continues to hold grave reservations about the wisdom of this legislative action. He is concerned that by its action the Congress has eliminated an important incentive for a negotiated settlement in Cambodia, has weakened the security of Cambodia's neighbors in Southeast Asia and has eroded the structure of peace in Indochina laid down in the [Paris] agreements of Jan. 27.

Most importantly, this Congressional act undermines the prospects of world peace by raising doubts in the minds of both friends and adversaries concerning the resolve and capacity of the United States to stand by international agreements when they are violated by other parties.

## 'Reluctantly Accepted'

While noting the dangers of this legislative action, the President most reluctantly accepted the Aug. 15 cutoff date as a necessary compromise to avoid a major disruption in United States Government operations and to allow the Khmer Republic more time to adjust to the new situation.

You will recall that at the time this law was enacted, the President faced the alternative of accepting a June 30 cutoff date for halting all governmental operations through a veto of the appropriations bill to which this legislation was attached. To have terminated immediately all combat support for the Khmer Republic in the face of a massive enemy attack would have been an irresponsible act depriving the Cambodian Government of the essential time to prepare

for the future.

In light of three extreme alternatives, the only viable cause was to reluctantly accept the date of Aug. 15.

During the six weeks which have ensued, our combat air support, coupled with Cambodian efforts to improve and strengthen their forces, have left the Khmer Republic in better shape to defend itself. We hope that the Government will be able to defend itself and to hold its own against the insurgents and their North Vietnamese sponsors.

## 'Current Challenge'

In the meantime, the United States will stand firmly with the Khmer Republic in facing the current challenge and will continue to provide the maximum amount of economic and military assistance permitted by present legal constraints.

We continue strongly to support a cease-fire through negotiations among the Khmer parties. An end to the fighting and respect for Cambodia's sovereignty and neutrality are our principal goals there. Despite the efforts of many interested parties and the goodwill of the Khmer Republic, the Communist side remains intransigently opposed to any compromise.

I should also recall the President's warning in his Aug. 3 letter that the leaders of North Vietnam would be making a very dangerous error if they mistook the cessation of United States combat activity in Cambodia for an invitation to pursue a policy of aggression in Southeast Asia. It should be clearly understood in Hanoi that the President will work with Congress in order to take appropriate action if North Vietnam mounts an offensive which jeopardizes stability in Indochina and threatens to overturn the settlements reached after so much sacrifice by so many for so long.