

U.S. Action Linked To Drives by Foe

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White House sources offered an expanded account today of President Nixon's decision to send American troops into Cambodia, asserting that it was based almost entirely on estimates of dangerous enemy activity in recent days.

The sources also said that the President's strong rhetoric was influenced by reports of increased Soviet activity in the Middle East.

Informed officials made those points while providing some of the chronology of events and meetings leading up to the

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President's decision. They said that he thought about little else in the 10 days before his speech yesterday and participated in several unannounced sessions with his National Security Council and other smaller groups of advisers.

The chronology further suggests that Mr. Nixon's decision to send Americans to advise a largely Vietnamese thrust into the Parrot's Beak section of Cambodia—an operation that began Wednesday—was reached at the same time as his decision to send combat troops into the Fishhook area the next day.

There was no explanation of why the two operations were not coordinated.

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Start of the Chronology

The chronology begins, according to the sources, a day or so before the President's San Clemente speech, in which he announced the withdrawal of an additional 150,000 troops from Vietnam over the next year, declared the Vietnamization program a success and asserted that the end of the war was in plain view.

He was said to have been concerned about developments in Cambodia but not enough to insert more than a stern warning against further Communist excursions.

At that time, according to White House sources, Vietnamese Communist movements in the direction of the Cambodian capital were regarded as essentially defensive maneuvers designed to make their sanctuaries more secure.

In the next few days, however, Communist activity increased and so did the President's. The chronology runs as follows:

On April 20, as Mr. Nixon was putting the finishing touches on his San Clemente address, North Vietnamese troops attacked the Cambodian towns of Takeo and Snoul. Mr. Nixon returned to Washington, unexpectedly, that night.

On April 21 the Communists pushed closer to Phnompenh, attacked Saang, a town about 15 miles from the capital, and persuaded Mr. Nixon's high command that the enemy was determined to transform the entire border area into a largely self-sustaining base of operations for future assaults against South Vietnam.

Dismay Was Voiced

The National Security Council met the next day for a long announced session devoted to Cambodia. No decision was taken, but some of the members reportedly expressed dismay that the Communists had chosen to respond to Mr. Nixon's San Clemente speech—in which he not only announced withdrawal but repeated earlier peace offers—with renewed activity in Cambodia.

There was also some discussion of intelligence information that the North Vietnamese planned a "high point"—large attack—in South Vietnam in the first six days of May.

On April 23 a small group known as the Washington Special Action Group and chaired by Henry A. Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, began considering Cambodia.

Mr. Nixon flew to his retreat at Camp David on the 24th and on Saturday the 25th he summoned Mr. Kissinger. Mr. Nixon ordered a secret National Security Council meeting Sunday.

By Monday the President had decided what to do. At about the same time, the White House sources report, he agreed to allow American military advisers to accompany South Vietnamese troops on attacks into the Parrot's Beak area.