

# U.S. Wants Viets to Stay In Cambodia

SECURITY  
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Washington

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird said yesterday it would be a mistake to set a timetable for South Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, and a Saigon spokesman declared his forces will remain "as long as necessary."

These remarks, taken together with statements at the White House and State Department, made it clearer than ever that the Nixon Administration wants to see the South Vietnamese keep the pressure on the Communists in Cambodia after all Americans are out by the Nixon deadline of June 30.

Laird reiterated that the American withdrawal will include advisers with South Vietnamese units. A Pentagon spokesman later said that while all tactical air support for the South Vietnamese will end when the Americans leave Cambodia, the question of strategic air support, the B-52 raids, will be decided at that time. Laird has recommended keeping up air strikes against Cambodia's Communist supplies and bases after the U.S. withdrawal.

### STAGE

In remarks on the NBC Today show, Laird also set the stage for an Administration claim of a victory in the Cambodian incursion that will make it possible to speed up American troop withdrawals from South Vietnam, presumably prior to the November election.

Laird said, "I think it would be a mistake . . . to make a firm timetable and establish it here for the South Vietnamese forces to withdraw" from Cambodia. This was in contrast to President Nixon's May 8 press conference statement that "I would expect that the South Vietnamese would come out approximately at the same time we do."

Laird added that as Defense chief he felt that "if the occasion should arise when the South Vietnamese forces could go into the sanctuary areas at a time when the sanctuaries are rebuilt,

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or when there are North Vietnamese occupying the particular territory, I would recommend that they be used, if they so desired."

### TIMETABLE

To set an announced timetable of South Vietnamese withdrawal would "destroy the military by keeping the — certainly keeping the — North Vietnamese off guard."

However, he said such South Vietnamese action would have to be worked out between Saigon and the Cambodian regime "and would not be a matter in which we would become involved in any direct way."

He conceded the strong anti-Vietnamese feeling among Cambodians, a feeling now reportedly coming to the surface again, and he added that because of massive American support to South Vietnam, "we have a considerable amount of influence which we can exert. And I believe that it is important for us to use that influence properly."

### AMBASSADOR

This most candid administration statement on continued South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia came after American Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, just back in Saigon from Washington conferences with Mr. Nixon, met for an hour and 20 minutes with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Thieu. Bunker had said on arrival in Saigon he would be discussing the Cambodian operation with the South Vietnamese.

At the White House, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said, "It would not be appropriate to put a timetable on South Vietnamese forces." He refused to say whether the United States will provide logistical support for Saigon's forces if they stay on after the American withdrawal.

Even Ziegler's remarks about completion of American logistical and air support was carefully drawn. He said that "will be complete at that time (June 30) relating to the sanctuary operations."

### DATE

At the State Department, spokesman Carl Bartch said he could give no date when the South Vietnamese will leave Cambodia and that he did not know if the United States has ruled out future support for the South Vietnamese if they remain.

Some Pentagon officials would like to be able to strike at North Vietnamese supply lines and depots beyond the border bases that have so far been attacked. This would mean air attacks deep into Cambodia to the line of the Mekong River, an area to which the North Vietnamese reportedly have been retreating to escape the U.S. and South Vietnamese incursions and air attacks.

Laird contended the Cambodia operation has been "a great tactical success" in destroying facilities and capturing ammunition and food. But he added that the "strategic success" would be judged on the basis of the operation's effect in insuring success of the Vietnamization program and thus affecting the rate of American withdrawals from South Vietnam in "the third and fourth quarter" of 1970.

The "very fine job" done in Cambodia by the South Vietnamese forces, the secretary said, "will permit us to move forward with this whole Vietnamization program." That means turning the war over even faster to the South Vietnamese and withdrawing Americans.

Laird argued that "these strategic successes" will "have a great effect upon American public opinion" and an even greater effect in stimulating North Vietnam to "have some sort of successful negotiated settlement."