

# President's Promise On Troops

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San Clemente

President Nixon announced the "successful" completion of the Cambodian incursion yesterday and gave what appeared to be a flat promise not to send American troops back into that country.

He left himself considerable latitude on the future use of American air power in Cambodia, but said, "There will be no U.S. ground personnel in Cambodia" except for the regular embassy staff in Phnom Penh, the capital.

This prohibition, he said, covers advisers to Cambodian and South Vietnamese units.

## REPORT

Mr. Nixon made no startling new disclosures in his 7000-word report on the Cambodian venture, much of which was devoted to a detailed recital of the accomplishments of the mission — including his claim that it has assured the continued withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam.

But of special interest to observers were the following major points:

- By suggestion if not by direct statement, he made clear his conviction that Cambodia, now bereft of United States troops, would become a clear test of the Nixon doctrine of transferring combat responsibilities from American to Asian forces. He called on Cambodia's allies to assist her and said he would help subsidize the efforts of "third countries who wish to furnish Cambodia with troops or material."

- He pledged earlier appeals to Hanoi to begin serious peace negotiations, pledged to accept any solution arrived at by the South Vietnamese themselves, and acknowledged—as he has before—that any "fair solution" would require a division of post-war power reflecting "the existing relationship of political forces."

- On the military front, he

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told the Cambodians that the United States would continue to fly "air interdiction missions" against Communist supplies and personnel, but told the South Vietnamese that they should not expect tactical air support for their operations within Cambodia.

- As for the accomplishments, Mr. Nixon gave a full inventory of the huge stocks of enemy arms and supplies uncovered in the sanctuaries, and said the operation has reduced potential American casualties, given "added" security to the withdrawal program, purchased time for the South Vietnamese to train themselves for eventual assumption of combat responsibilities, improved American credibility with the enemy, and thereby enhanced the "prospects of a negotiated peace."

The President introduced these major points with a long historical section which, in summary, accused the North Vietnamese of provoking the U.S. intervention and set forth in some detail the chronology of events leading up to the April 30 decision to send American troops in to the Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.

## COMPLETE

The chronology was more complete than any Mr. Nixon has offered in the past. He asserted that the United States could have lived with a continued Communist presence in the sanctuaries had the Communists not chosen to expand them, and he confirmed published reports that he had tried through diplomatic channels — although not, it seems, in direct messages to Hanoi — to preserve the status quo in Cambodia, only to be rebuffed by the enemy.

## UNANSWERED

But the chronology did not answer all questions. He admitted for the first time, for example, that he had been deeply concerned about Communist activities in Cambod-



ia well before April 20, when he announced the withdrawal of 150,000 more troops from South Vietnam.

But he did not fully explain why he had limited himself in that speech to a single warning to the enemy in Cambodia, nor did he explain why the general tone of that speech, quite apart from the specific announcement of the withdrawal of 150,000 troops, was so bullish and optimistic about the prospects for peace in Indochina.

Moreover, the central theme of Mr. Nixon's chronology — namely, that he responded only to overt attempts by the enemy to move out of the sanctuaries and seize the entire 600-mile South Vietnamese-Cambodian border — would seem to clash with assertions from some Administration officials that Nixon saw the fall of Prince Sihanouk as an "opportunity" to clean up the sanctuaries.

#### SALUTE

Mr. Nixon saluted the competition of a withdrawal of all U.S. ground forces on the day he set as the deadline for this and declared:

"To the leaders of Hanoi, I say the time has come to negotiate."

"For our part," he said, "we shall renew our efforts to bring about genuine negotiations both in Paris and for all of Indochina."

He credited the Cambodian incursion with many major accomplishments, including the guaranteeing of continued American troop withdrawals from Vietnam.

#### GOALS

Many difficulties remain, he said, and some setbacks are inevitable but, "The Cambodian operations will enable us to pursue our goals with greater confidence," Mr. Nixon declared.

"When the decision to go into Cambodia was announced April 30, the President added, "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."

#### FAIR

Mr. Nixon contended there is no military solution for the war in Southeast Asia and that peace can come now through a negotiated settlement that is fair to both sides and humiliates neither.

"Or," he added, "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 a honorable peace and the costs of continued war."

Mr. Nixon went on to say that "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."

#### SEARCH

He went over these principles again: "We search for a political solution that reflects the will of the South Vietnamese people and allows them to determine their future without outside influence.

"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."

#### CREDIT

The President credited his Administration with a record of restraint in the Far East.

He said he had three options. One was to continue the existing level of American involvement, which he discarded as incompatible with his "Nixon Doctrine" to place increasing responsibilities on the Asian nations and unacceptable to the American people.

He said the second was immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces.

This was rejected, he said, as a course of capitulation, incompatible with America's commitments and traditions and "disastrous in terms of its long range consequences to the peace in the Pacific and peace in the world."

#### SHIFT

The third option, the one Mr. Nixon selected, was that of a gradual shifting of the entire combat burden to the South Vietnamese. This was through the "Vietnamization" program which Mr. Nixon credited as permitting withdrawal of 110,000 American troops so far and a commitment to withdraw another 150,000 by next spring.

White House officials who provided background briefings for newsmen after the release of the President's report emphasized that Mr. Nixon had no intention of reintroducing American troops into Cambodia.

They appeared to leave open the slim possibility that unforeseen events — such as the massive appearance of North Vietnamese troops or communist Chinese troops in Cambodia — might require a reversal of this policy, but they said they could not conceive of such circumstances arising.

#### HOPE

On the contrary, these officials said, they are more than hopeful that an adequate defense of Cambodia could be contrived with a combination of small arms assistance to Cambodia, which Mr. Nixon pledged to continue, the operations of South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, and steady bombing by American planes.

The officials insisted that such bombing would consist exclusively of raids aimed at enemy personnel and supply convoys — comparable to the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail — and would not involve close-in tactical air support of Cambodian units with fighter planes and helicopter gunships.

But they conceded that there would be occasional situations where it would not be easy to distinguish between interdiction of supplies and tactical support.