

Sir Robert Thompson, a British counter-insurgency expert who has advised President Nixon on the Vietnam war, said on Wednesday [Apr 14] in London that the South Vietnamese campaign in Laos was a "complete success," and said that it proved the South Vietnamese troops "will be ready to fight on their own soon." Sir Robert, who recently returned from his 25th visit to Vietnam, during which he advised the South Vietnamese on the organization of the country's police, has on earlier trips assessed the state of the war for President Nixon.

Sir Robert said that civilian and military morale in South Vietnam was extremely good following the Laotian campaign. He said, "I should say the South Vietnamese will be ready to stand alone soon with only logistic and air support from the Americans. They have some very fine generals now and their whole capability has improved." Sir Robert said that the fighting in Laos helped to place the North Vietnamese in "a defensive posture for the first time." He said, "The North Vietnamese are not as potent a force as they were 30 years ago, though they will be able to go on fighting as long as they get support from the Soviet Union and China." Sir Robert said that South Vietnamese troops have proved that they can operate beyond their own borders and that "in the future the North Vietnamese will have to expend troops merely to protect the Ho Chih Min trail in Laos." Sir Robert said he opposes a rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and said that President Nixon's latest withdrawal plan was "just right."

In reference to his work in helping reorganize the police force in South Vietnam, Sir Robert said that "terrorism in Saigon has been greatly reduced." He said, "Saigon is safer at night than any American city and many other cities around the world."