

President Backed

To the Editor:

Many thousands of Americans, both soldiers and civilians, are caught in a highly dangerous situation in Vietnam. This is especially so in the light of our previously announced intent to withdraw.

Considerations of the potentials of their risky situation must come first. This requires action by one commander in chief, not 101.

This is no time to hold the 1972 election, or even the fall election for 1970. Nor is this the time, nor do we have the atmosphere now, for responsible debate over the fine lines of authority between Congress and the President, or between the Senate and the House. Successful extraction of our Americans from over there, out of a potentially explosive situation, is the first order.

Our President's plans for doing so have been previously announced, clearly stated. I approve of his announced current actions for carrying them out. I commend him for not telegraphing his moves ahead to the enemy.

Orderly, well calculated and well defended withdrawal is the preferable choice. Retreat in haste is a risky business, which could result in a terrible slaughter of our own countrymen. The history of military withdrawals is replete with examples.

What we need here at home right now, rather than hysterics, is good common sense, based on sober thought, for the sake of our men over there at least, if not for ourselves. That is our real and first responsibility at this time.

DONALD E. CLARK
Rohnert Park, Calif., May 3, 1970

Guards' Training

To the Editor:

As a member of the 107th Infantry National Guard Unit of New York State, I would like to point out certain facts concerning the useless killings of the four students at Kent State University.

All National Guard units throughout the country are trained for riot control in a standardized manner. The objective is always to clear out unruly mobs with the minimum amount of force.

The bayonet is an obvious deterrent in moving crowds. Gas is also used to separate large groups and clear specific areas. The only time that the M-1 rifle is used is when there is an immediate threat to the life of the individual soldier. Never are we told by the officers to fire into crowds as a tactic.

Critics point out that the students threw rocks, and that there was sniper fire from the buildings. In the first place, the buildings should have been secured by the troops and patrols set up on the rooftops. Part of our training deals with

the reality of being pelted with objects by the crowd.

This by no means should justify firing back with bullets. The statistics show that only one soldier was injured—felled by heat stroke.

What becomes appalling is the constant self-righteous attitudes by President Nixon, Vice President Agnew and others who are quickly satisfied with easy answers. It is easy to personalize the issues. It is easy to label all student dissenters as "bums." But it is not easy to accept the reality of our times.

I am ashamed to be a member of the National Guard.

Specialist/4 ANGELO RAMON
New York, May 5, 1970

Cambodia Decision

To the Editor:

The President's Cambodian decision was announced with a nice sense for ironic timing on the very eve of "Law Day, U.S.A." It will vex international law and international lawyers for years to come.

We have invaded Cambodia. The U.N. Charter provides that "All members shall refrain . . . from the . . . use of force against the territorial integrity . . . of any state . . ." and this rule is reinforced and restated throughout the corpus of international law.

The President gave us no hint of how his action in Cambodia could conceivably square with this most solemn and fundamental international legal commitment. Our Vietnam role has been explained on the ground that we were joining the South Vietnamese Government in an exercise of the

right of "collective self-defense."

The best that can be said for our new venture is that the Cambodian Government was warned a few hours beforehand that a U.S. invasion was on its way.

I know of no occasion since the enactment of the U.N. Charter in which the U.S. has so frankly resorted to raw force in the territory of another state without its permission and invitation.

That the other side first violated Cambodian territory—and hence international law—is not a legal justification for our use of force in Cambodia. Nor is the fact that we regard those who camped across the border as our enemy. (Or that the Russians occupied Czechoslovakia.)

Countless speeches now will proclaim that this nation chooses "law"—rather than force, to which the Communists are said to be addicted—as the chosen instrument for settling differences. Countless other speeches now and in the months to come will counsel our citizens to nonviolence in the face of biting domestic problems.

Yet the President of the United States has chosen force, not law, in Cambodia. What is to be said for fine ideals and restraint in the face of such a flagrant violation of basic international legal commitments?

WILLIAM D. ROGERS
Washington, May 1, 1970

The writer was formerly Deputy U.S. Coordinator of the Alliance for Progress and from 1966 to 1970 president of the New York Center for Inter-American Relations.