

'Closed' Decision-Making

4 Men Acted On Cambodia

By Stuart H. Loory
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Washington

When it came down to the end, only four men had heard all of the arguments for and against the invasion of Cambodia by American troops.

They were President Nixon; Henry A. Kissinger, his assistant for national security affairs; William P. Rogers, secretary of State, and Melvin R. Laird, secretary of defense.

Kissinger, Rogers and Laird, without giving formal opinions, all argued against the invasion during the intense series of meetings on the problem conducted in Washington and at the presidential retreat of Camp David between April 22 and April 27.

CREDIBILITY

Having heard enough, Mr. Nixon retired to his hideaway office in the executive office building, across the street from the White House, on the evening of April 27.

By that time it was clear to the president that his credibility was on the line with the leaders in Hanoi. After the downfall of Prince Norodom Sihanouk as Cambodian chief of state, Mr. Nixon had sent word secretly to Hanoi through several channels that he would respect the Cambodian sanctuaries in which the enemy garrisoned 40,000 troops if they would make no effort to move out of the havens and threaten

Cambodia. If they did move out, he told Hanoi, he would have to take serious action.

Reports reaching his office from the field led the president to conclude that the North Vietnamese had disregarded the warning. He felt he had to respond.

At least Kissinger, it was learned, agreed. But he favored, as a response, not the invasion of Cambodia but the renewed, limited bombing of North Vietnam, a plan Mr. Nixon adopted along with the invasion.

CALLS

Alone, surrounded by the mementos of one of the most resilient careers in all the history of American politics, Mr. Nixon settled in to consider the problem and reach a decision on whether to order the implementation of Operation Shoemaker — the American invasion of the Fishhook area of Cambodia, just across the border from Tay Ninh province in South Vietnam.

Several times that evening he placed telephone calls to the White House. Then calls went out to his other key staff members, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, the White House Chief of staff, and John D. Ehrlichman, the domestic affairs chief. The president also called William Tommons, his assistant for congressional liaison.

And finally he called the First Lady in the executive mansion, apparently to say he was working late and that she should not wait dinner.

A tray was ordered instead from the White House mess and the Chief Executive, as is often his wont, dined alone, his mind pre-occupied with a far-away piece of Cambodian jungle and paddy land from which, his generals had told him, the enemy di-

12 Berkeley Protesters Are Indicted

A dozen young people arrested during anti-ROTC protests April 15-17 at the University of California at Berkeley, have been indicted by the Alameda county Grand Jury.

The jury heard 16 witnesses, most of them law officers, before returning the felony indictments to Presiding Superior Court Judge William H. Brailsford Thursday night.

Indicted were:

Michael David Morris, 21, of 2361 California street, San Francisco, student, possession of a firebomb, bail \$10,000.

David Reid Aie, 21, of 2140 Oxford street, Berkeley, two charges of assault on an officer, bail \$10,000.

Michael Lyle Baker, 22, of College avenue, Berkeley, assault with a deadly weapon on a campus officer, bail \$5000.

The rest of the accused were indicted on charges of assault on an officer. Bail was set at \$5000. They were:

Michael Boyer Swanson, 20, of 2527 Harrison street, Oakland; Nancy Claire Coons, 19, of 2822 Garber street, Berkeley; Marlin Spencer Halach, 25, of 2431 Ellsworth street, Berkeley, a student;

Marcus Anthony Garcia, 20, of 31426 Grrrnbrriar way, Hayward; Adrian Benton Fulcher, 21, no address; Steven Ross, 19, of 6650 Dana street, Berkeley;

Ain Russell Fortney, 19, of 503 San Carlos, Alhama; Joseph B. Fluet, 25, no address; Gregor Charles Williams, 20, of 2335 Derby street, Berkeley, a student.

rects the war in South Vietnam.

MOBILIZING

At 9:15 p.m., he left the office and returned to his living quarters on the second floor of the executive mansion.

At the point, American troops in South Vietnam were already mobilizing to carry out the orders if the President should decide in favor of Operation Shoemaker.

The companion campaign, Operation Rock Crusher, to assist South Vietnamese troops in clearing the enemy out of the Cambodian sanctuaries in the Parrot's Beak area, 36 miles west of Saigon, had already been authorized by the President. B-52 bombers had already been ordered into the air to soften up the soon-to-be-invaded Fishhook.

And yet, dozens of experts in the State and Defense Departments, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council staff still did not know the President had the possibility of an invasion on his mind.

CLOSE

"It was a very closely held decision," one senior State Department official said. "Things have not yet gotten as bad as they were under Lyndon Johnson around here but it's coming close. Right now, they're very sensitive about leaks.

"The problem is that the decision was made way up on top without consulting the people who had the details. And lots of us are very worried that this portends other closed decisions like that.

"It's very troublesome."

The problem, as seen by the bureaucrats, is that the President, Kissinger, Laird and Rogers reached their decision without any detailed staff work being done. The vast information grid, upon which the national security

apparatus feeds, each day breeds a bewildering array of detail from which, at any given time, could emerge nuggets of information of incalculable value to a decision maker.

EXPERTS

Within the bureaucracy, there are experts trained to mine this lode. In the Defense Department, for example, there is a Vietnam Task Force of some two or three dozen experts. The task force leaders meet every day with Laird for about two hours to discuss Vietnam. The task force was not alerted to the possibility of the invasion.

In the State Department, there is headquartered an inter-agency ad hoc committee on Vietnam headed by William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, which coordinates operations for the Vietnam Air

fronts — diplomatic, military, economic, pacification and, over-all Vietnamization. The Sullivan Group had no idea that in the White House a fateful decision was in the making.

Similarly, there is an ad hoc operations committee for Cambodia and Laos, headed by Sullivan's colleague, Jonathan Moore, another Deputy Assistant Secretary, which knew nothing about the coming change in strategy. (Although in official rhetoric, the war in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia is one; bureaucratically, it is considered separate operations.)

COINCIDENCE

One other key member of the State Department decision-making team — Elliot L. Richardson, the number two man in the department — had been cut out of the process by a coincidental turn of events.

Richardson, who is very close to Kissinger and his trusted confidant, was abroad for a conference in Germany, and a tour of Turkey and Iran.

Instead of using experts who had a command of the details, the President and his three advisers relied on other top level officials, each of whom had responsibilities other than Vietnam that helped consume their time.

Those were the members of the so-called "Washington Special Action Group," a small, select committee chartered to deal with unforeseen national security crises.

The members of his group are U. Alexis Johnson, undersecretary of state for political affairs (number three in the department); Richard Helms, director of the central intelligence agency; General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and David Packard, deputy secretary of defense.

MITCHELL

One last analyst, who, by virtue of his position could not be pigeon-holed on any committee but who, by virtue of his relationship to the president, was a key participant in the decision was Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

"I have never been through such a day in my life," Kissinger told an associate about the same time the President secluded himself in his hideaway office.

RENEW

Tuesday morning, April 28, Kissinger was still reviewing the situation with associates in case the President asked him for a formal recommendation. One of the factors weighing heavily on the adviser's mind was the depth of the reaction he foresaw on college campuses.

The President is known to have thought he could make the invasion palatable to the American people by saying it was only temporary, that the American troops would be withdrawn when the operation had ended in six or eight week's time.

He failed to reckon with the fact that Americans had heard such promises before about the Vietnam war and were no longer so believing of their leaders.

The April 30 speech announcing the invasion is history.