



# Brand New War for U.S. in Cambodia

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**F**OR THE next year or two most of the fighting will probably be in Cambodia and Laos," Deputy Ambassador Sam Berger said the other day. And that offhand comment by one of the beakiest of the hawks here in Saigon explains why most of the Washington justifications for the Cambodian operations carry so little weight.

For the Washington apologia are based on the standards of the war as it used to be. But in fact there is a whole new war here, featuring new commitments to a new regime in Cambodia, which entails new forces in being, new opportunities for the other side, and a new set of criteria to measure success or failure.

In the war as it used to be, the other side had settled down to a strategy aimed at countering President Nixon's Vietnamization program. The primary objective was to weaken and discredit the South Vietnamese regime by selective strikes against its installations and officials all across the country.

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**T**HIS STRATEGY did not lend itself to counterattack by American and South Vietnamese forces. Even by American estimates, enemy killed-in-action fell in the first quarter of this year by about 50 per cent — 3000 to 2000 a week. And there were corresponding drops in enemy losses of weapons and supplies.

Set against that measure, the Cambodian venture registers a dramatic improvement by our side. Estimates of enemy killed-in-action soared to nearly 6000 in

the first week of May and then held at about 300 weekly. There were well-publicized discoveries of huge stocks of rice, weapons, ammunition, and other stuff. The South Vietnamese forces showed a capacity to execute highly coordinated strikes on the ground and by air and sea. The operation looks, in short, like an unqualified success.

But in the process, American objectives in the war have been raised. The United States has acquired, or at least become credited with, a new protege. Rightly or wrongly, the general view here is that the United States intervened in order to save the Cambodian government which replaced the regime of Norodom Sihanouk — the new government of Prime Minister Lon Nol.

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**T**HE VIEW HERE, in short, equates American interest with the Lon Nol government. If not absolutely obliged, the United States is under heavy pressure to keep the Lon Nol government going. If that regime falls, the Cambodian operations will be called a failure.

The Cambodian operation cannot be measured by the standards of the old war. The numbers of enemy killed, the amount of supplies seized, and the improved performance of the Saigon forces are not the kind of factors they used to be. A whole new war is on, and it is far too early to measure success or failure.

Indeed, perhaps all that is clear is that anybody who needs a quick success is in bad trouble.