

# Congress Told It Can't Cut Off Bombing

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— Defense Secretary Elliot L. Richardson told the Senate Appropriations Committee today that the bombing of Cambodia would continue even if Congress refused to provide the Pentagon with additional spending authority.

Without an emergency transfer of funds in the military budget, however, Mr. Richardson forecast a "near-crippling" cutback in operations in other parts of the world, with "the readiness of our worldwide forces degraded to a dangerously low level."

As probably one of his final assignments as Secretary of Defense, Mr. Richardson, who has been designated by President Nixon as the new Attorney General, was sent by an apparently worried White House into a growing Congressional fight over funds for the Cambodian bombing.

The Administration has requested as part of a supplemental appropriations bill now before Congress that the Defense Department be permitted to transfer \$500-million in funds from one account to another, in part to pay for the bombing that has been going on almost steadily in Cambodia since early February.

## House Action Is Due

In the House, a move is due to be made Thursday to deny the Defense Department authority to use any of the transferred funds to bomb Cambodia. The current White House appraisal is that such a move would succeed by a narrow margin in the House and almost certainly would prevail when the supplemental appropriations bill reaches the Senate.

The Administration counterstrategy was outlined in the Richardson statement presented to a closed-door meeting of the Senate appropriations committee. It emphasized that the transfer of authority was essential to meet military operating expenses in the remaining weeks of the fiscal year, which ends June 30, but not necessary to support what Mr. Richardson described as the "relatively small" cost of the Cambodian bombing.

Mr. Richardson also sought to meet the argument advanced on Capitol Hill that, if Congress approved the transfer authority, it would in effect be giving Congressional sanction to the President's military actions in Cambodia. Recent court decisions have held that Congress in effect authorized the intervention in Vietnam by voting appropriations for the war.

## Doesn't Cover Bombs

Asked by reporters whether Congressional approval of the transfer request would amount to Congressional endorsement, comparable to the 1964 Tonkin Gulf resolution, Mr. Richardson replied:

"I don't think we should express this in terms of endorsement, one way or the other." At the same time he argued that if a cut-off of funds for the Cambodian bombing was defeated in Congress, it would amount to Congressional assent to the President's policies in Cambodia.

Mr. Richardson estimated only the cost of the fuel for the planes, not the far more costly bombs. As he explained, with "ordnance we are drawing down" existing stocks that will be "replenished later" out of future fiscal appropriations.

Mr. Richardson suggested that even without the transfer authority, there would be

ample funds to continue the bombing in Cambodia. In large measure, this assessment depended upon the cost that Mr. Richardson attached to the bombing. Talking to reporters before the committee hearing, he estimated that the cost of the bombing, "over and above what we otherwise would be spending," was now running at \$5-million a month. In his prepared statement, he suggested that the bombing between now and the end of the fiscal year on June 30 would run to about \$25-million.

In contrast, based on the daily rate of some 60 B-52 bombers and 160 fighter-bombers over Cambodia, Congressional estimates of the cost of the bombing have run to around \$5-million a day.

Mr. Richardson said the transfer authority was necessary because of a shortage of operating funds due in most part to devaluation of the dollar, higher subsistence costs from increased food prices, and "a higher-than-programed rate of activity in Southeast Asia" in the first half of this year. If the operating funds could not be replenished from other accounts in the defense budget, he said, a number of drastic steps would have to be taken, including curtailment of flying hours by the Air Force and "steaming hours" by the Navy, reduction in training programs and a freeze on promotions.

## Congressmen to File Suit

BOSTON, May 7 (AP)—Four Democratic Congressmen from Massachusetts said today that they are filing a suit in United States District Court seeking to halt the bombing in Cambodia. Representative Michael J. Harrington said in a statement that "we believe the President's action in ordering bombing in Cambodia is illegal."