

# Nixon Says U.S. Will Bomb North if Foe Steps Up War

*In News Conference, He Also Threatens Retaliation if American Planes Are Fired On During Reconnaissance*

By JOHN W. FINNEY DEC 11 1970

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 10 — President Nixon declared tonight that if North Vietnamese Forces “increase the level of fighting in South Vietnam,” as American forces are withdrawn, he would retaliate by ordering the bombing of military targets in North Vietnam.

At a nationally televised news conference, the President also

*Transcript of Nixon's news conference is on Page 32.*

said that he would continue to order the bombing of missile and military complexes in North Vietnam if United States reconnaissance planes were fired upon over North Vietnam. [Question 1, Page 32.]

The President thus seemed to broaden his interpretation of the understanding that he said was reached between the Unit-

ed States and North Vietnam when President Lyndon B. Johnson halted the regular bombing of the North in 1968.

As part of that understanding, as previously defined here, the United States agreed to suspend the bombing of North Vietnam. In return the Hanoi Government reportedly agreed to cease infiltration through the demilitarized zone, to stop the shelling of cities in South Vietnam and to enter into “productive” discussions at Paris, which required the seating of South Vietnam at the negotiating table.

In discussing foreign-policy matters, the President also made these points:

¶He considers that any extended, unilateral cease-fire over the holiday season would

Continued on Page 4, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

be dangerous but the United States is prepared to enter into a "limited" cease-fire with the Communist side. [Question 1.]

He can foresee no circumstances under which the United States would use ground troops in Cambodia, Mr. Nixon praised the proposed \$255-million military aid program for Cambodia as "the best investment" that could be made to save American lives and bring American troops home. [Question 9 and 19.]

He has not abandoned hope in the Paris peace negotiations, but North Vietnam's rejection of a prisoner exchange offer, made in Paris today, will "pinpoint" Hanoi as "an international outlaw." [Question 6.]

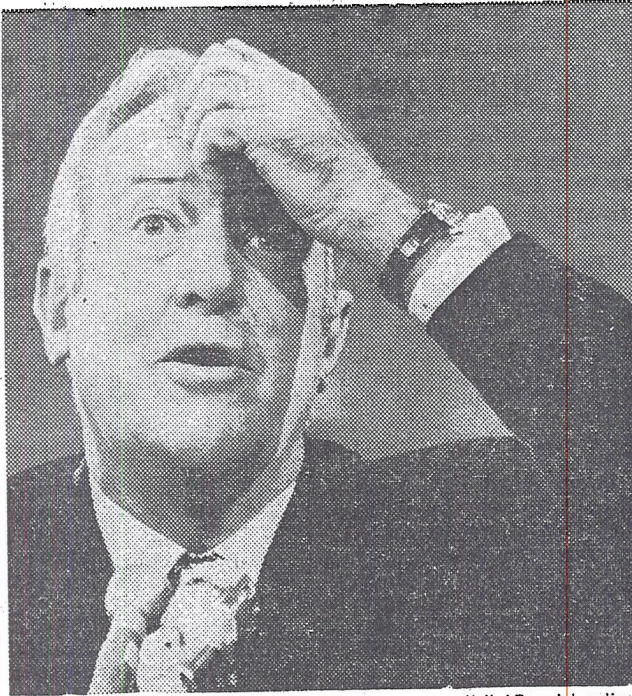
In giving his interpretation of the understanding governing bombing in North Vietnam, the President seemed to broaden the prohibition against North Vietnamese infiltration across the demilitarized zone to include any general increase in North Vietnamese military activities and capacity in South Vietnam.

Emphasizing that he wanted to be "very sure that the understanding is clear," Mr. Nixon said that as American forces are withdrawn from South Vietnam, it becomes "vitally important" to take steps that are necessary to protect the remaining troops.

"If, as a result of my conclusion that the North Vietnamese by their infiltration threaten our remaining forces, if they thereby develop a capacity and proceed possibly to use that capacity to increase the level of fighting in South Vietnam, then I will order the bombing of military sites in North Vietnam, the passes that lead from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, the military complexes and the military supply lines," he said.

To avoid any "misunderstanding" on the part of North Vietnam, the President also emphasized that the United States reserved the right to conduct reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam without any interference.

"I must insist that there be continued reconnaissance over North Vietnam," he said, "because as we are withdrawing our forces, I have to see whether or not there's any chance of a strike against those



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Secretary of State William P. Rogers at Senate hearing

forces that remain, and we have to watch for the build-up.

"If our planes are fired upon, I will not only order that they return the fire, but I will order that the missile sites be destroyed and that the military complex around that site which supports it also be destroyed by bombing."

In spelling out his interpretation of the understanding, Mr. Nixon said he was doing so to prevent any "misunderstanding with regard to this President's understanding about either reconnaissance flights or about a step-up of the activities."

The President seemed to be making explicit the warnings that he has implied in the past of steps he might take if North Vietnam took military advantage of United States troop withdrawals from South Vietnam. As far as the Nixon Administration is concerned, he also cleared up any uncertainty over whether the understanding permitted reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam—a point on which there had been some confusion.

While threatening military action against North Vietnam, the President was emphatic in ruling out a future American military role in Cambodia. Asked whether he could foresee any circumstances in which American ground forces would

escalating into "a guarantee for the survival" of the Cambodian Government. The President described the proposed aid program now before Congress for approval as "the best interest in foreign assistance that the United States has made in my political lifetime."

Noting that the Cambodian forces were "tying down" some 40,000 North Vietnamese regular troops that otherwise would be in South Vietnam "killing Americans," the President said "the dollars we send to Cambodia save American lives and permit us to bring Americans home."

The President thus reinforced Secretary of State William P. Rogers, who earlier in the day on Capitol Hill emphasized that the Cambodian aid program was essential to the Vietnamization program and did not represent a commitment to the Phnompenh Government of Premier Lon Nol.

The secretary of state also stressed that the Nixon Administration had no intention of introducing ground troops into Cambodia, if only because the Administration was restricted by domestic "political imperatives" from becoming involved in a ground war in that country.

be used in Cambodia, the President tersely replied: "None whatever."

Then he was asked how he could prevent an American military aid program from

Mr. Rogers, speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, explained the Administration's determination not to send ground troops to Cambodia by saying, "The political imperatives are such that this Administration can't get involved because we wouldn't have popular support, because we wouldn't get Congressional support."

In his first public appearance before the committee in nearly 18 months, Mr. Rogers testified for more than three hours in support of the Administration's request for \$7-billion supplementary military aid, including \$255-million for Cambodia.