

RICHARDSON CALLS RAIDS ON CAMBODIA VITAL TO LON NOL

Terms Phnom Penh Regime
Imperiled by Guerrillas
Supplied by Hanoi
APR 2 1973

U.S. BOMBING CONTINUES

Defense Chief Says Attacks
Are Aimed at a Truce—
Thieu Arriving for Talks

NYTimes

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 1—Secretary of Defense Elliot L. Richardson today defended the continuing American bombing of Cambodia as necessary to keep the anti-Communist Government of President Lon Nol alive and to pressure Communist forces into accepting a cease-fire there, as they have in Vietnam and Laos.

Appearing on the National Broadcasting Company program Meet the Press, Mr. Richardson said that "it would be very difficult" for the Cambodian Government to survive without American air support because of what he called "a massive threat by well-armed, well-organized guerrilla forces, which include forces from North Vietnam itself."

As Mr. Richardson was speaking, the United States Pacific command in Honolulu announced that heavy bombers and tactical aircraft again struck Communist positions in Cambodia today. Command sources said that the level of bombing was about the same as in the last several weeks.

[President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam headed for Los Angeles Sunday for two days of talks with President Nixon. It was Mr. Thieu's first visit as President to the United States mainland. Page 3.]

Goes Further Than Nixon

The continued bombing of Cambodia has come under strong criticism from senators of both parties who have argued that there was questionable justification for American military involvement in Cambodia—or elsewhere in Indochina—now that all American military forces have left South Vietnam.

But Mr. Richardson repeated the Administration's concern over violations of the Vietnam cease-fire agreement by Hanoi and went further than President Nixon in holding out the possibility of renewed bombing and other military action against North Vietnam if the violations became a threat to peace.

Asked if among the "meaningful options" open to Mr. Nixon, should he decide that the situation was "getting out of hand," were the renewed mining of North Vietnamese harbors or the bombing of military targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, Mr. Richardson said:

Implied Threat Conceded

"I wouldn't care to speculate, but you have certainly identified among the kinds of things that could be done. You know one could include any of the things that have been done in the past."

In accusing Hanoi of violating the cease-fire by infiltrating men and supplies from the North into South Vietnam, Mr. Nixon had said that the North Vietnamese "should have no doubt as to the consequences if they fail to comply with the agreement."

In the past, Administration spokesmen have refused to be specific on the possible consequences, but have not denied that Mr. Nixon's remarks contained an implied threat to renew the bombing. Today, Secretary Richardson, asked if he meant to say that Hanoi and

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Haiphong might again be bombed, replied: "I was merely noting the point that if you are identifying possible courses of action, you have to include as possible all of the things that have been done by way of U.S. air action, or other interdiction action, and so on, in the past."

At another point, Mr. Richardson was asked for assurances that the United States would "never, under any circumstances," send military forces back to Indochina.

Consistent with the Administration's often-stated desire not to tip its hand to Hanoi, Mr. Richardson replied: "No. I cannot give any categorical assurance. Obviously, the future holds possible developments that are unforeseeable now. But certainly we very much hope that this will not be necessary."

Aid to North Defended

Mr. Richardson defended the concept of giving aid to Hanoi—something opposed by many members of Congress.

Asked whether, in light of the "rather horrifying tales" told by returning American prisoners about treatment in North Vietnamese prisons, and the increased infiltration into the south, "you really believe we can bribe Hanoi into being peaceful?" Mr. Richardson did not discuss the treatment of prisoners, but said: "I don't think it is a question of bribery."

He added that the Administration hoped "to reinforce those elements in North Vietnam who see an opportunity for the constructive development of the economy and the opportunity to meet long-deferred domestic needs."

Asked about the Constitutional justification for the Cambodian bombing, Mr. Richardson answered, "I don't think it is difficult unless you are looking for some line in the Constitution that deals specifically with this kind of situation."

"Basically, I believe that our Constitutional authority rests on the circumstances that we are coming out of a 10-year period of conflict. This is the windup. The fighting in Cambodia is a kind of residue; it is the area where least of all there is now being observed the provisions of the agreements entered into in Paris."

Cambodian City Attacked

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 1 (Reuters)—Communist forces attacked the provincial capital of Takeo in southern Cambodia and kept a stranglehold on the supply routes to Phnom Penh.

A Cambodian military spokes-

man did not report any position evacuated or overrun, and no other details were given of the battle at the town 42 miles south of the capital.

The Communists have cut Route 2 from Phnom Penh to Takeo during the last few days and overrun outlying positions around the town of about 20,000. Meanwhile, the Mekong River, the capital's main means of supply, remained closed to shipping.

Government officials said

that gasoline rationing would probably be imposed tomorrow as stocks in Phnom Penh dwindled.

The military spokesman said that four ground attacks took place along the banks of the Mekong last night, the closest about 12 miles east of Phnom Penh.

Fighting was also reported during the day along the capitals other supply line, Route 4 leading to Kompong Som, Cambodia's chief port.