

Cambodia Bombing Is Losing in Congress

THE AMERICAN BOMBING OF Cambodia which has been going on for nine weeks at the rate of 40,000 tons a month, has lost the support—if it ever had it—of the House of Representatives. It seems certain to come to the same end in the Senate.

Last week's House vote, 219-188, for denying a Pentagon request to transfer \$500 million into what is roughly describable as the Cambodian bombing fund constituted the first House vote in eight years to waver on the war.

While this decision cannot conceivably prevail over a presidential veto, and indeed will not even deter the Defense Department, says Secretary Elliot Richardson, from going ahead with raids in the meantime, it sent a wave of apprehension through Administration ranks. Minority leader Gerald R. Ford said: "I can't help saying that this is a very, very sad day . . . The House, which had a track record of strength and firmness, is now cringing and crumbling."

SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS has argued before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Nixon Administration has "constitutional authority" for the bombing strikes until a cease-fire agreement is reached in Cambodia, as called for in Article 20 of the Vietnam accord. These strikes, he contended, do not represent a commitment by the United States to the defense of Cambodia as such but "meaningful interim action" to bring about compliance with the accord. That is the position which Dr. Henry A. Kissinger also set forth to the nation's newspaper publishers and which no doubt he will urge and defend later this week when he meets the North Vietnamese negotiator, Le Duc Tho, in Paris.

So there is the issue: Congressional majorities take the view that the Nixon Administration is starting up a new war; Kissinger and Rogers that the B-52 and fighter-bombing is a continuing operation (not forbidden by the cease-fire pact) to consolidate peace with honor.