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## Defiance on Cambodia...

The nation moved a step closer toward what Senate Majority Leader Mansfield has warned could become "a true constitutional crisis" when a Senate appropriations subcommittee yesterday accepted a House-approved prohibition on the transfer of funds for bombing in Cambodia. The Administration has already indicated it will ignore such a ban even if it is endorsed by Congress.

Any continuation of the bombing after expected Senate approval of this provision would amount to open defiance of the clear intent of Congress to put an end to United States military action in Cambodia. In order to check such an abuse of Presidential power and to begin to restore its own integrity, Congress would be obliged to move to a more drastic confrontation by banning funds for United States military activities anywhere in Indochina without prior Congressional approval, as long proposed by Senator Case, Republican of New Jersey, and Senator Church, Democrat of Idaho.

If the President has learned anything at all from the Watergate and allied scandals and the national revulsion they have produced, he will act now to avert this ultimate showdown. The White House indication that it will persist in its present policy in unconstitutional defiance of Congress would, if carried out, enormously exacerbate the present tension that is already seriously affecting the political process.

If the system of checks and balances which is the ultimate safeguard of American liberties is to be preserved, the developing constitutional crisis over the Administration's persistent arbitrary military involvement in Indochina needs to be resolved decisively in favor of Congress.

## ...and in Laos

The admission of an Administration official that the United States is financing the presence of 15,000 to 20,000 Thai "irregular" troops in Laos offers another shocking illustration of the Administration's disregard of Congress and the Constitution in the persisting military interventions in Indochina.

The funding of foreign mercenaries in Laos is specifically forbidden in an amendment to the Department of Defense authorization bill for 1971. The Administration has argued in the past that these mercenaries in Laos were all indigenous "volunteers" of Thai origin. But inquiries by Senate investigators and American correspondents have revealed that the "volunteers" were in fact reservists who had come from Thailand and expected to return there.

In addition to being flagrantly illegal, continuing American support for the Thai mercenaries violates the spirit of the Paris accords and contradicts Administration claims that it is disengaging from Indochina, especially if, as a Senate source has indicated, their numbers were drastically increased late last year in anticipation of the Vietnam cease-fire agreement.

Congress obviously must take additional steps to insure that its will is followed to the letter in Laos as well as in Cambodia and elsewhere throughout Indochina.