

From column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak:

The first major policymaking victory by Melvin R. Laird in his tenuous new role as White House counselor was President Nixon's agreement to end all Indochina bombing by Aug. 15, a compromise frowned on by national security chief Henry Kissinger.

Even Mr. Nixon's strongest supporters on Capitol Hill, including House Republican Leader Gerald Ford, had become convinced they could not limit the bombing ban to Cambodia and Laos. Since the ban would also include Vietnam, they urged a time cut-off as the only possible compromise.

But Kissinger was negative. One dovish Republican senator called him to urge a time cutoff compromise but got the impression from Kissinger that Mr. Nixon would veto any bombing ban covering all Indochina in order to keep his option for future bombing of Vietnam, North or South.

The difference was made by Laird. In close contact with Ford, he convinced Mr. Nixon the Aug. 15 deadline was the best possible retrieve.

A footnote: The compromise averts one future possible collision between Laird and the President. Laird, who as Secretary of Defense fought the 1972 Christmas bombing, would have adamantly opposed future bombing of North Vietnam, even in response to a Communist offensive. The Aug. 15 cut-off kills that presidential option.