

NYTimes NOV 2 1973  
**Cambodian History Is Reshaped**

By SYDNEY H. SCHANBERG  
Special to The New York Times

**PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Nov. 1**—The United States Embassy recently reported, somewhat belatedly, that the insurgents attempted to mount a big offensive against the Cambodian capital 10 days after the American bombing halt on Aug. 15, but that it was repulsed, largely by Government artillery.

No one else in Phnom Penh saw such an offensive; the Cambodian High Command never reported it.

This is one of those curious though not infrequent episodes in the Indochina war in which history seems to be reshaped to suit a current need. In this case the need is to convince Congress to approve \$200-million extra in military aid to Cambodia for the current fiscal year; \$170-million had already been requested.

The embassy has been lobbying for increased aid for some time, about as long as the government of President Lon Nol has been asking for it, and no one here disputes the embassy's contention that without more help the Government, as an American official put it, will be in a very serious situation.

**New Version Disputed**

There is also agreement in the foreign diplomatic community that the Communist insurgents, with the help of their North Vietnamese backers, will mount a new military drive with the coming of the dry season in December, when they will be able to move off the roads again and infiltrate throughout what are now water-swamped plains and paddy fields.

There is one thing the foreign observers do not agree with, and that is the Americans' new version of events.

**Offensive Is Described**

At a briefing for American newsmen last week, a high embassy official said of the insurgents: "There was an attempt to get an offensive going on the night of Aug. 25 along the whole southern band"—a reference to the Government's defense perimeter 20 to 25 miles south of Phnom Penh.

When a reporter said that he and other newsmen and diplomats had not discerned such an offensive, the embassy official replied a bit testily: "The reason you did not see the enemy coming at you was that the offensive was stopped by Government forces mostly by the effective use of artillery."

A Western military attaché, typical of several interviewed, commented: "I must admit I never heard of this offensive. I particularly find it doubtful since on Aug. 6, before the bombing cutoff, the enemy forces on the southern front were beginning to break contact and pull back, and they virtually completed that operation within a week."

The Americans have also begun talking recently about how enemy pressure has increased since the bombing halt; as in the case of the alleged offensive, no one else has noticed this either, with the exception of the assault in September on the province capital of Kompong Cham, which was saved in a rare victory for Government troops.

**Level of Combat Stays Low**

Otherwise the level of combat, according to military observers, including Cambodians, tapered off somewhat just before the bombing halt and has since remained relatively constantly at a lower level. The monsoon rains, which make large movements of troops impossible, are the main reason for this slowdown; the insurgents' need to recover from the losses inflicted by the bombing is probably another.

The embassy's reconstruction of events is perhaps explained in part by President Nixon's reconstruction of events in his message to Congress Oct. 19 asking for the extra \$200-million, in which he said the bombing halt "was followed by increased Communist activity."

Mr. Nixon also seemed to get his Cambodian seasons mixed up, saying that "the period of heaviest fighting in August and

**New Version Offered by U.S. to Support Request for Aid**

September has tapered off somewhat during the current rainy season." Actually, August and September are the height of the rainy season.

During those months, the President asserted, ammunition costs for the Government forces "were running almost \$1-million per day" and "we anticipate similar average costs for the remainder of this fiscal year." This, he added, is why the further \$200-million was needed for the fiscal year which ends June 30.

**Before the Bombing Halt**

One reason the original request did not take into account increased ammunition costs was that it was prepared before Congress voted the bombing halt and was based on an indefinite continuation. Now the Cambodians must try to do on the ground what the American bombers used to do for them.

Whether the President exaggerated the Cambodian ammunition costs in the fashion of time-honored Capitol Hill bargaining is not clear—before the President's message Pentagon

officials reported an ammunition average of about \$500,000 a day—but what is clear is that the Cambodian forces are expending, and in many cases wasting and selling corruptly, large amounts of ammunition and equipment.

Throughout the night in Phnom Penh the sound of steady artillery fire cleaves the air as Government guns hurl shells at an unseen enemy, who may not even be there, to keep him from infiltrating into the city.

And during the day, every time insurgent troops infest a village, Government units move just close enough to open fire with withering fusillades by heavy machine gun and cannon in the general direction of an enemy who may have moved out before the firing begins. "They'll do anything to avoid eyeball-to-eyeball contact," a Western military analyst remarked. "They don't send men out—they send out firepower."

The American Embassy does not acknowledge any waste of ammunition but says the Cambodians have had to increase the use of artillery and infantry weapons to make up for the loss of the American air armada and also that they have to go through "a learning period" to discover the most efficient use of these weapons.