CHAPTER 11

No Peace in Indochina

Public sentiment turned against the Vietnam War well before Richard Nixon entered the White House in January 1969. Not only was the conflict politically divisive, but it had grown exceedingly expensive in lives lost and dollars spent. Between 1965 and 1968 more than 30,000 U.S. military personnel died in combat. South Vietnamese combat deaths for the same period were close to 64,000. Enemy combat deaths in South Vietnam had reached 360,000. By fiscal year 1968 the war's annual cost had reached $28.5 billion, nearly a third of Defense Department outlays. The U.S. presence had ballooned from about 1,600 advisers in January 1961 to more than 536,000 personnel in January 1969. The introduction of U.S. combat forces in 1965 and the escalation of fighting had not led to decisive victory, but to costly battlefield stalemate.[1]

Largely because the war was unpopular, Nixon and Defense Secretary Melvin Laird initiated Vietnamization, a policy of gradually withdrawing U.S. forces from Vietnam and building up the size and capability of South Vietnam's military forces. But despite an impressive amount of training, weapons, and equipment flowing into the South between 1969 and early 1972, the president and the defense secretary harbored doubts about the soundness of South Vietnam's forces as Nixon's first term ended. The North Vietnamese 1972 Easter offensive sorely tested Vietnamization and showed that the additional American military hardware Washington had sent to Saigon did not compensate for underlying flaws in the leadership and organization of South Vietnam's military.[2]

The war created deep rifts among Americans that even the January 1973 peace accords, the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and the end of an unpopular and unfair conscription system could

not bridge. After the signing, many in Congress demanded that the administration end American involvement in what they saw as pointless bloodletting and took action to cut off funds to South Vietnam. The administration justified its aid for anticommunist regimes in Saigon and Phnom Penh on the grounds of honoring commitments and preserving U.S. credibility. But the Nixon administration's arguments for continued support fell on deaf ears among the public and their elected representatives as the Watergate scandal eroded the president's credibility and standing. Public disenchantment continued unabated following Gerald Ford's succession to the presidency.

A Shaky Peace

After arduous and prolonged negotiations, the United States, the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) signed the Paris Peace Accords on January 27, 1973, that called for a cease-fire throughout South Vietnam and the end of all U.S. military activities against North Vietnam. It required U.S. and allied military personnel to leave South Vietnam within 60 days and stipulated that U.S. prisoners of war (POWs) would be repatriated. Of greatest significance, the agreement allowed North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units already in South Vietnam to remain there, a major negotiating victory for the Hanoi government. This presence created an opportunity for North Vietnam to resume the military conflict and make it more difficult for Saigon to govern rural villages and districts, many of which were still controlled by the Viet Cong. As a result, the PRG competed with the Nguyen Van Thieu government for legitimacy in South Vietnam. The agreement banned the opposing sides from bringing troops, advisers, or additional war materiel into South Vietnam; however, each side would be allowed to make periodic, one-to-one replacements of weapons that had been

destroyed, damaged, or worn out. The Paris agreement placed no restrictions on military assistance to North Vietnam from the Soviet Union and China—another aspect of the terms that favored Hanoi. The signatories also pledged to respect the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia, agreeing to end military activities there and completely withdraw troops and advisers.[3]

Nixon wanted to present the agreement as a "peace with honor" and the major goals of the war as achieved. In a personal, eyes-only memorandum of January 25, 1973, H. R. "Bob" Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff, instructed National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger on how the president wanted the agreement portrayed. Kissinger should emphasize that the peace accords would assure "the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their future without having a Communist government imposed on them." The settlement was no "bug-out" by the United States; in Nixon's estimation the pact simply ended the war for the people of Indochina.[4]

Laird, the architect of Vietnamization, was more cautious than the president in his appraisal of the accords and the prospects for South Vietnam. He saw the post-accord era not as one of peace, but only as turning over the ongoing struggle between Hanoi and Saigon to more capable South Vietnamese armed forces. He thought it was a mistake for Nixon to promote the impression that peace had been achieved because this reasoning would only make it more difficult for the United States to justify sending additional military aid. Laird also fully expected the NVA to further test South Vietnam's military on the battlefield.[5]

North Vietnam viewed the agreement from a radically different perspective. In getting the American troops to withdraw and also end air and naval attacks on North Vietnam, the agreement had ended the period of foreign military occupation and opened the path for the unification of Vietnam. Because North Vietnam had suffered extensive economic damage from years of U.S. bombing and broad conscription of manpower for the war, the cease-fire gave

Hanoi a respite to rebuild its economy and its forces for the "final battle" to liberate South Vietnam. Under the agreement, North Vietnam had, according to an official history, achieved its objective: "keeping our forces and positions in South Vietnam intact so that we could continue to attack the enemy." For Hanoi, the agreement merely ended one phase of the war and allowed the North to prepare for the next.[6]

Nguyen Van Thieu, president of the Republic of Vietnam, had opposed the terms of the agreement, seeing them as a mere pause that would allow North Vietnam to resume the war after the Americans departed. He signed the agreement under great pressure from Nixon and Kissinger and their none-too-subtle threat that the United States would sign the peace accords with or without South Vietnam. To allay Thieu's anxieties, Nixon privately reassured him on numerous occasions that the presence of North Vietnamese troops "was manageable" and that as president he would "respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam."[7]

Several months before the cease-fire, Nixon had ordered a massive buildup of South Vietnam's arsenal to prepare the country to stand on its own. Under projects Enhance and Enhance Plus, the Defense Department sent large amounts of U.S. equipment to bolster the RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces). From late October to mid-December 1972 the United States delivered over 105,000 pieces of equipment for the South's army, navy, and air force. This decision was made without input from the Joint Chiefs and was as much a political gesture as a military measure. While the delivery was meant to show Nixon's support for Thieu's government, much of the equipment was inappropriate for the RVNAF and went directly into storage. South Vietnam's ambassador to the United States, Bui Diem, later ruefully observed that the buildup "was hastily and ill-conceived, and the whole program had little value."[8]

Before the cease-fire, the communists also resupplied their forces in the South, seeking to rebuild after their heavy losses in the 1972 offensive. Some units inside South Vietnam had been completely wiped out and others suffered significant losses of armored vehicles, heavy artillery, and other war materiel. Soldiers and cadre were fatigued. But aid from China and the Soviet Union allowed North Vietnam to initiate a robust program of force development. The communist bloc sent 2.8 million metric tons of goods in 1973, 50 percent more than in 1972. The total for 1974 amounted to 3.5 million tons. Additionally, North Vietnam utterly ignored the cease-fire restrictions on shipments of war materiel to its forces in South Vietnam. Troops and supplies routinely crossed the DMZ and the Laotian border without inspection or control until the war ended in 1975. After U.S. bombing ceased in 1973, the North transformed the Ho Chi Minh Trail, paving and widening some sections.[9]

The cease-fire went into effect on January 28, 1973 and officially halted all U.S. offensive military operations. The last U.S. forces left Saigon on March 29, 1973. On that day, the departing commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), General Frederick Weyand, deactivated the command. Under the provisions of the peace agreement, a residual U.S. military presence comprising the Marine Corps unit guarding the U.S. Embassy and the newly formed Defense Attaché Office (DAO) under Army Maj. Gen. John E. Murray remained in Vietnam. Located in the former MACV headquarters at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the DAO included 50 military officers and roughly 1,200 civilians who were mostly contractors. Its job was to monitor South Vietnam's military and provide technical assistance, especially with intelligence and communications. American military and civilian advisory teams in each province and district, however, were withdrawn, leaving a few small field offices staffed by civilians scattered in the countryside. The U.S. Support Activities Group/Seventh Air Force was

established in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, under Air Force General John W. Vogt Jr. to prepare for the possible resumption of the air war in Southeast Asia and to serve as a liaison between the South Vietnamese Air Force and U.S. Air Force units based in Thailand.[10]

Around the time the cease-fire was signed, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) consisted of just over 162,000 regular infantry soldiers in 13 divisions and numerous Ranger groups, plus approximately 288,000 personnel in training, logistics, medical, and other administrative support functions. These were augmented by approximately 525,000 nonregulars in Territorial Forces, performing regional and local security roles and supporting regular forces. These ground forces faced a formidable adversary. According to one estimate, communist combat forces in South Vietnam amounted to 148,000 troops (123,000 North Vietnamese regulars and 25,000 Viet Cong guerrillas) organized into 15 infantry divisions. North Vietnam's administrative and service troops in the South brought the total to 219,000. Another estimate counted 170,000 combat troops there and about 100,000 regulars in Cambodia and Laos. The numerical imbalance of forces in South Vietnam's favor did not tell the whole story, however. The bulk of NVA supporting forces contributing to the communist war effort remained over the border in North Vietnam. Moreover, the North's combat forces in the South were almost entirely devoted to offensive operations while South Vietnamese forces largely conducted defensive operations at fixed locations. This scenario enabled the North Vietnamese Army to control considerable territory. Of South Vietnam's four military regions, by early 1973 NVA forces controlled the northern and northwestern parts of Military Region I and portions of the provinces in Military Regions II and III bordering Laos and Cambodia.[11]

Military Regions in South Vietnam

Source: *Marine Corps History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2021)

Supplying South Vietnam's armed forces strained the U.S. military's reserve supply levels. The transfer of M-48A3 tanks to the South forced some U.S. armor units to use the less effective M-48A1s. Even though the Paris accords allowed one-for-one replacements of combat losses, during his brief tenure Defense Secretary Elliott Richardson proposed limiting replacements to whatever the United States could afford to lose without further degrading U.S. forces or making diversions from grants or sales commitments. Nixon overruled his defense

secretary, deciding in March 1973 to continue one-for-one replacement. The president wrote that North Vietnam was already in clear violation of the cease-fire terms by continuing to infiltrate men and materiel into the South and reasoned that any reduction in U.S. replacements would imperil South Vietnam's war effort. Moreover, Saigon "could and probably would" interpret a reduction as evidence of softening U.S. support while North Vietnam and its Viet Cong allies could interpret such a move as a long-term change in U.S. policy.[12]

The accords initially inspired optimism among U.S. officials in Washington and Saigon about the short-term prospects for South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese Army had suffered heavy losses during its offensive of 1972 and clearly needed time to recover. In early March 1973, before disbanding MACV, General Weyand sent Richardson a mixed assessment. South Vietnam's military was "capable of defending the South Vietnamese from any but a major power supported attack of massive proportions" He asserted that "Vietnamization has succeeded and that within the next six to twelve months, other than for the essential requirement of continued economic/military aid, we will have done everything for the South Vietnamese we can reasonably do to ensure their political and military independence." His comments underscored South Vietnam's continued dependence on U.S. aid; if the cease-fire failed to deter the communists from seeking a military solution, then the United States would have to decide whether to get militarily involved once again in South Vietnam.[13]

Weyand based his assessment of South Vietnam's military on four critical factors: Thieu's ability to gain international support; Thieu's success in stemming the endemic corruption that weakened his government and eroded public support; the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff's ability to improve logistics, strengthen the chain of command, and motivate its forces; and the continuation of U.S. military and economic assistance at adequate levels. Weyand had

misgivings about the RVNAF's reliance on U.S. intelligence, and he was concerned about degradation of South Vietnam's air force if U.S. logistical support was not maintained or indigenous management failed to improve. He also expressed concern about the variable quality of ARVN division and regimental commanders. The departing U.S. commander noted that Hanoi and the Viet Cong remained focused on unifying Vietnam under communist rule. They intended to remain in South Vietnam at least through 1978 and were replacing materiel and personnel to restore its military capabilities "to pre-invasion levels."[14]

At the beginning of April, Richardson faced skeptical questions from a House appropriations subcommittee about what the costly U.S. effort in South Vietnam had achieved. The chairman, Democrat George Mahon of Texas, wondered how durable the cease-fire would be and whether North Vietnam within a few months or years would overrun the South. The United States, he noted, no longer had a robust military presence in Southeast Asia. Richardson expected South Vietnam could handle renewed fighting and remain stable but advised that a flagrant North Vietnamese violation of the cease-fire might require significant American military assistance. He was optimistic that the cease-fire would hold, believing North Vietnam had "every reason" to compete "peacefully through political means rather than through military means." Yet he asserted that if the cease-fire violations continued, the president had residual authority to respond militarily and needed "no new grant of authority to continue what we were doing before the peace agreements were signed, under circumstances where those agreements are not being fully adhered to."[15]

Hanoi Builds Up While Washington Debates

Contrary to Richardson's optimism, the Paris Accords ushered in no era of peace but rather a new phase of armed conflict in the South Vietnamese countryside. The cease-fire did not settle the central issue of the war—who would govern South Vietnam—and both sides continued to pursue their goals. Some Saigon officials saw the agreement as a way for the United States to exit while continuing to support South Vietnam as it confronted communist forces in their southern enclaves. For North Vietnam, with sizable forces already stationed inside South Vietnam, the agreement provided a path towards a complete victory over the South. Both sides had fought for maximum territorial advantage before the cease-fire went into effect (the so-called "war of the flags" or "land grab campaign"), and after it did so, fighting continued unabated as the NVA, Viet Cong, and ARVN each pursued its goals. According to DAO intelligence chief Col. William Le Gro, engagements during this period represented a transition "spanning the end of the second Indochina war and the beginning of the third." The battles in the first three months of the cease-fire (from late January through late April) saw heavy losses on both sides. Fighting killed over 6,600 South Vietnamese soldiers and forced over 200,000 refugees from their homes.[16]

In the immediate post-agreement period Hanoi committed to rebuilding its forces inside South Vietnam. Because the 1972 Easter Offensive had also weakened North Vietnam's military and economy, the politburo envisioned the near future as a time to engage in political struggle while sending more men and materiel to South Vietnam. With 219,000 North Vietnamese regulars and Viet Cong guerrillas in the South, Hanoi had a formidable foundation for resuming the military struggle. Moreover, believing another conventional war was inevitable, Hanoi's politburo sought military aid from the Soviet Union and China.[17]

At the end of February 1973, alarmed U.S. officials discussed North Vietnam's infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam. Director of Central Intelligence James Schlesinger informed Kissinger that intelligence analysts had detected the transfer of 500 tanks and 1,250 trucks loaded with ordnance and artillery to the South. Kissinger told the Washington Special Actions Group on March 5 that the president had "no intention of letting North Vietnam take over South Vietnam militarily—particularly in 1973." Kissinger wanted to be "brutal with military force" in confronting communist cease-fire violations. In contrast, on March 1 Richardson publicly stressed the need to obtain a commitment from the Soviet Union and China to limit the amount of military equipment they provided to the Hanoi government and thus remove the temptation to mount a large-scale offensive. The communist nations made no commitment on limiting arms.[18]

In early March aerial photography revealed that the North Vietnamese, despite the cease-fire, had set up two surface-to-air missile sites in the Khe Sanh valley, about 25 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating North and South Vietnam. Admiral Thomas Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Richardson that the North Vietnamese were still moving tanks and artillery into the South and that truck traffic into Laos and through the DMZ was increasing. "In short," Moorer reported, "logistic activity continues to follow past dry season patterns with no sign of a cease-fire or let up." His conclusion was ominous: "These developments are a direct manifestation of the efforts of the North Vietnamese to establish an improved military posture which can be used for major operations directed against the Republic of Vietnam."[19]

By mid-March Richardson had hardened his resolve and sent Kissinger a list of three

possible actions (each applying a different level of pressure) to force North Vietnamese compliance with the January agreement, along with his assessment of the consequences that could flow from each. The fundamental challenge was to signal to Hanoi that the United States understood the scale of North Vietnamese infiltrations southward and was prepared to take action, while at the same time not jeopardizing the release of POWs still held in North Vietnam. Richardson hoped his first option—a private warning to Hanoi accompanied by a strong yet unspecific threat of follow-on action—would coax the North Vietnamese government into compliance and not put POW releases at risk. But he recognized that it would "virtually commit us to further action" if violations continued. The secretary's second option, two or three days of intensive airstrikes against infiltration routes, could drive home U.S. determination and, at best, convince Hanoi to forego using the Ho Chi Minh Trail and comply with the Paris agreement. But given the demonstrated resiliency of North Vietnam's infiltration networks, he thought a few days of bombing could also fail to persuade Hanoi and put remaining POW releases at risk. Richardson's third option, which he called a "maximum" response, consisted of bombing and mining on the scale of late 1972's Linebacker II. It carried high political risks and would put remaining POW releases at risk, but the secretary argued it could also impose unacceptable costs on North Vietnam. Regardless of which option (if any) Nixon chose, the secretary advised that the United States had to be willing to permit "legitimate" resupply of Hanoi's forces in the South through "legitimate" points of entry.[20]

The WSAG had met twice to consider the issue and concluded that North Vietnam's actions were making a major enemy offensive against South Vietnam more likely. Its members recommended bombing infiltration trails in southern Laos as soon as possible after the next group of American POWs had been released (two groups had already been released, and a third

was scheduled for March 16). Doing so would have "the most immediate effect with the least risk." Kissinger was supportive. On March 14 he urged the president to approve Richardson's second option of two to three days of strikes on the trail area of southern Laos. The strikes could begin immediately after the third release of U.S. prisoners of war, two days hence. He reminded the president that the diplomatic efforts through the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and the International Commission for Control and Supervision (two bodies set up by the peace agreement) to investigate major violations had yielded no results. North Vietnamese forces now operated in daylight in the Laotian panhandle and the northern areas of South Vietnam's Military Region I, generating enough traffic to cause congestion. Nixon approved the planning for the airstrikes but did not order that they occur immediately.[21]

Secretary Richardson began harboring doubts about new bombing, however, in the week since he sent his three options to Kissinger. At a breakfast session on March 16 the two men discussed what an attack might accomplish. They agreed that the United States could not allow "a total flouting" of the Paris accords and that inaction put past U.S. achievements in South Vietnam at risk. Kissinger did not think military action would prove decisive, but thought it had to be done to convince Hanoi that Nixon was "hair-trigger" and might do anything to stop North Vietnamese infiltration of the South. He said the president favored the high-risk approach of striking while North Vietnam still held American POWs. The defense secretary said bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail for 48 hours would do "little good," to which Kissinger responded "That is not the point. It's a psychological point we must make." Richardson also raised a red flag about funding because Representative Mahon had warned that Congress would not support the old military assistance service-funded (MASF) program after U.S. forces had withdrawn.[22]

On March 20, 1973, Nixon discussed the pros and cons of an airstrike with Kissinger's deputy, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft. Citing the lack of public support for any kind of bombing and the likelihood of an adverse congressional reaction, Nixon wondered if it was "really worth sending these planes over to knock out a few trucks and tanks." He showed little appetite for facing additional criticism. His vacillation was in marked contrast to his earlier resolve when deciding to mine Haiphong harbor and mount an all-out bombing campaign against North Vietnam in 1972. In his memoir, Nixon rationalized his inaction by claiming he wanted to focus on other areas of the world and new foreign policy goals "now that the Vietnam war had ended."[23]

Considering the funding difficulties and U.S. disengagement from a controversial war, it is difficult in retrospect to envision how the renewed bombing Kissinger advocated could have been politically sustainable in the United States. Weary of the long, divisive war, even conservative Republicans expressed misgivings. At an appropriations committee hearing, Senator Norris Cotton of New Hampshire told Richardson, "As a dyed-in-the-wool, moss-backed administration Republican, I do not want to go on record to authorize one red cent to continue hostilities in Southeast Asia" now that American combatants had withdrawn from Vietnam.[24] Nixon's mounting Watergate problems also made renewed bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail less likely. Revelations by convicted Watergate burglars pointed to senior White House officials being criminally involved in the break-in of Democratic campaign headquarters. On the morning of March 21, the day originally proposed for airstrikes in Laos, White House counsel John Dean told Nixon that congressional, Justice Department, and media investigations of the Watergate break-in were getting closer to the president. Members of Nixon's inner circle—Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, and John N. Mitchell—were correctly suspected of being involved in the original

cover-up plan. “We have a cancer within, close to the Presidency,” Dean famously pronounced, and “it is growing daily.” That evening Nixon delayed the strikes indefinitely.[25]

At the end of March, Richardson reviewed the situation in Vietnam for the president. Both sides had strengthened their forces, he wrote, and each “will be stronger than before, but with an uncertainty regarding US air support.” Since the cease-fire Hanoi had infiltrated through Laos and Cambodia between 345 and 465 tanks, as many as 200 artillery pieces and 15,000 troops, with another 20,000 in the pipeline. Richardson was concerned but remained confident in South Vietnam’s ability to defend itself. The RVNAF’s combat effectiveness had improved after the Easter Offensive of 1972, leading him to conclude that the government of South Vietnam was “in general, in a good position, with good future prospects” and stronger than its adversary. Even if the South Vietnamese suffered heavier than expected losses, Richardson concluded that the RVNAF could cope with the expected attrition over the next few years. At the time intelligence estimates also indicated the communists were unlikely to engage in main force warfare before the end of 1973.[26]

In mid-April North Vietnamese violations of the cease-fire in Laos (signed several weeks after the Paris Accords, on February 21) forced the Nixon administration’s hand on a renewal of bombing. Some 35,000 fresh North Vietnamese troops had entered South Vietnam or nearby sanctuaries since late January, an increase in personnel and supplies that, Kissinger observed, surpassed the enemy buildup before the Easter Offensive. He was worried that the president, consumed by Watergate, was “simply unable to concentrate his energies and mind on Vietnam” and, as a result, “continued to dither” instead of taking action against North Vietnam’s blatant cease-fire violations. Nixon continued to resist Kissinger’s entreaties to respond with airstrikes. Only when Laotian premier Souvana Phouma requested U.S. airpower to help him repel an April

15 NVA attack on the northern crossroads town of Tha Vieng did the administration revisit the issue. Nixon approved B-52 and F-111 sorties against NVA positions around Tha Vieng, and that same evening, before the bombing began, Kissinger informed Richardson that the president was also thinking of including targets along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.[27]

Chairing a meeting of the WSAG the next day, April 16, Kissinger pushed for expanding the bombing beyond Tha Vieng—to Ho Chi Minh Trail sites in the Laotian panhandle and even to NVA positions in South Vietnam. He argued, "For us to piddle away our air power in isolated areas [like Tha Vieng] is a waste." The Nixon administration's domestic critics were going to pounce whether the airstrikes were limited or extensive, so it would be better to "hit them [the communists] massively" and make them think "if they push us too far, then we can't be controlled." According to Admiral Moorer, several promising targets existed along the trail that U.S. planes could bomb, but the best ones fell within range of air defense batteries the North Vietnamese had installed at Khe Sanh after the peace accords went into effect. In the form of questions, Kissinger summarized the key issues before the group: first, should the United States expand air operations in Laos; second, if the answer was yes, then should that expansion occur around Tha Vieng in northern Laos or in the vicinity of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos; and third, if the expansion occurred in southern Laos, should the United States also strike NVA targets in South Vietnam?[28]

The WSAG met again the next morning to answer these questions. The Defense Department had already developed a plan for bombing infiltration routes with a roughly four-to-one emphasis on the trail targets in southern Laos versus NVA targets in South Vietnam. At the meeting Kissinger directed Admiral Moorer to devise a contrasting plan with a four-to-one emphasis on NVA targets in South Vietnam. Meanwhile, reports trickled in that the bombing of

Tha Vieng, begun a mere 24 hours earlier, was subsiding as communist forces dispersed into the nearby countryside, leaving few clear targets. With the ebbing of this original justification for bombing, DCI Schlesinger asked whether Kissinger thought the administration needed a new justification before beginning any expanded bombing (using whichever of the two new plans). Kissinger said he would advise the president that WSAG members thought the "pretext" offered by Tha Vieng had "expired" and that he should await a new justification before ordering additional bombing. But Kissinger feared that Nixon would again lapse into indecision, so he directed Moorer to develop the South Vietnam-heavy option quickly and report it to him late that same afternoon. Shortly before 1800, Moorer provided strike details. Both plans called for 80 B-52 sorties and 400 tactical air sorties per day over four days. Targets in the first plan were oriented heavily toward southern Laos while the second plan favored communist targets in South Vietnam.

Something changed, however, in the hours between the WSAG meeting and Moorer's call. Perhaps Kissinger had talked with the president and told him WSAG members wanted him to await a new provocation before initiating one of the bombing plans. At the end of the call, a disappointed Kissinger told the JCS chairman, "We've decided to wait for the next provocation" rather than take immediate action. The window for expanded bombing of North Vietnamese infiltration routes into the South had closed. After more weeks of deliberation the United States ultimately took no military steps against North Vietnamese infiltration down the Ho Chi Minh Trail or across the DMZ. More provocations occurred, but with no U.S. response. Kissinger despaired: "Our strategy was becoming unhinged…. By 23 April it was clear that the President was not prepared to order any kind of retaliation." At the end of April, the Watergate investigation—a constant backdrop—reached a critical point; Nixon nominated Richardson to

replace Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, who resigned on April 30, along with Haldeman and Ehrlichman.[29]

By the end of 1973 North Vietnam had sent more than 100,000 troops southward, greatly improved the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and started construction of a petroleum pipeline. Thanks to the movement of troops from North Vietnam and recruiting within South Vietnam, Hanoi had as many as 310,000 main force soldiers organized into 10 divisions inside South Vietnam. This continued buildup increased the likelihood of a communist offensive. In late August Schlesinger, secretary for less than two months, acknowledged the grim situation in a meeting with officials from ISA. He hoped that the Saigon government would be able to survive another 5 to 10 years but said, at a minimum, the United States should not permit its fall or replacement by a successor government to come as the result of "overt, major aggression."[30]

Intelligence and policy assessments Schlesinger received in late 1973 painted a bleak picture of South Vietnam's ability to endure. A national intelligence estimate in October concluded that Hanoi's continued build-up was "clearly designed to insure [*sic*] that it can again resort to major military action" and that the overall military balance in the South could favor the communists by mid-1974. Hanoi's progress in forward basing troops and supplies, and in improving the road system, gave it the capability to launch a major military campaign with as little as one month of preparation. In early December Leonard Sullivan, the director of program analysis and evaluation, advised the secretary that a large-scale attack "could leave the outcome in doubt" unless the United States provided air support at the intensive levels of 1972. On December 21 Andrew W. Marshall, director of the Office of Net Assessment, wrote Schlesinger that without U.S. intervention South Vietnam's prospects were "grim." In Saigon, defense attaché Major General Murray was blunt and pessimistic: "The dominant fact is the enemy's

strength. Positioned better. Structured better. Unharassed by U.S. air. Supported with: better roads, longer pipelines, larger stockpiles, more guns and tanks and sophisticated equipment." Like other officials, Murray identified critical shortages: South Vietnamese forces would need $180 million for ground ammunition, $5 million for medical supplies, $4.3 million for subsistence, $8 million for air ammunition, and an unspecified amount for LSTs to prevent the enemy from closing the land route to Hué. The day after Christmas 1973, Ambassador Martin reported shortages even larger than Murray had projected.[31]

Funding

Obtaining enough military assistance funding to address South Vietnam's needs proved difficult. The post-peace agreement period started with a financial shortfall. The FY 1973 Defense budget had allotted $6.2 billion to support operations in Southeast Asia, but higher than expected munitions costs during the previous year, brought on by the Easter Offensive and the enhanced bombing of North Vietnam that preceded the Paris Peace Accords, amounted to $4.9 billion. That left only $1.3 billion to cover the last five months of the fiscal year ending on June 30. After the cease-fire, the administration, keenly aware of the lack of support in Congress, sought no supplemental FY 1973 funding for Southeast Asia. Instead, on February 28, 1973, Secretary Richardson asked for authority to transfer as much as $500 million between appropriations accounts. Office of Management and Budget Director Roy Ash concurred, but before the transfer could be executed the House of Representatives removed the necessary authority from the FY 1973 supplemental appropriations bill. Nixon's growing political weakness over Watergate made it difficult to overcome congressional assertions of power. South Vietnam could no longer expect much in the way of U.S. assistance.[32]

The prospects for the next fiscal year looked grim, as well. In January 1973 Nixon had requested an FY 1974 authorization for South Vietnam and Laos of $2.1 billion. In June the president lowered his request to $1.6 billion, but the House approved only $1.3 billion. The authorization and appropriations processes dragged on past the July 1 start of FY 1974, forcing DoD to operate on a continuing resolution. In September Schlesinger (having succeeded Richardson in early July) warned Senator John Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, that cuts in military assistance the previous fiscal year and "further reduction to the FY 1974 request and elimination of MASF this year would be devastating" (the MASF account covered the Vietnam War). South Vietnam and Laos depended on the United States for operations, maintenance, and hardware replacements. MASF money for the two nations was looked upon as essential for regional stability, according to Schlesinger. The Senate Armed Services Committee disregarded Schlesinger's plea and cut MASF to $952 million. Even more worrisome for the defense secretary was the attempt by Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to shift funding for South Vietnam and Laos from the Defense budget to the foreign aid budget, thus bringing it under the jurisdiction of his committee. The foreign aid bill the Senate had already passed contained no funds for South Vietnam and Laos. Schlesinger's September letter had also warned Stennis that further reducing the FY 1974 request or putting funding for Vietnam under the Foreign Relations Committee would be disastrous.[33]

In mid-December, Deputy Secretary Clements apprised Senator John McClellan, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, of two Senate actions with deleterious consequences that would "eliminate any chance for an outcome favorable to United States interests." The first would cut the administration's original MASF request by 36 percent.

The second, partly a reaction to the Arab oil embargo and rising oil prices, would prohibit the use of funds to provide petroleum products for Southeast Asia, leaving "those who have been our friends immobile and defenseless in a matter of weeks, at most." Clements sent the same letter to Representative Mahon, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations as well as its defense subcommittee. That Congress even considered such steps indicated a significant depth of feeling against continued support for the war. In December 1973 Congress approved $900 million in new obligation authority for MASF during fiscal year 1974 and allowed the funding of petroleum purchases.[34]

Although concerned about funding woes in congress, the crucial limitation that Schlesinger and Clements worried about in late 1973 and early 1974 was the ceiling of $1.126 billion Congress had set for MASF for South Vietnam and Laos in the FY 1974 defense appropriation act. Only about $300 million remained under the limit to cover the last half of FY 1974, because $826.5 million ($409.7 million in FY 1974 funds and $416.8 million in funds carried over from the prior year) had already been obligated. Assistant Defense Secretary (Comptroller) Terence McClary recommended—and Clements approved—that the DoD should ask Congress for an increase of $474 million in the FY 1974 MASF ceiling (from $1.126 billion to $1.6 billion) and should request an FY 1975 MASF ceiling of $1.4 billion.[35]

On November 29, 1973, Major General Murray, the U.S. defense attaché in Saigon, forwarded to Washington a list of $200 million in high-priority military items he thought the United States should deliver to South Vietnam within six months. He had extracted these items from a massive $2 billion request from President Thieu. The request was problematic not only because it exceeded the FY 1974 ceiling of $1.126 billion, but because, as Admiral Moorer pointed out, its contents were more about modernizing the South Vietnamese military than about

meeting urgent tactical requirements. Moreover, in evaluating the equipment on Thieu's list, the chairman noted most of it would "aggravate the already serious problem the RVNAF has in absorbing materiel delivered in Projects ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS." Rather than improve the South's operational effectiveness, a delivery of the requested items would adversely affect U.S. force readiness by depleting war reserve stocks and delaying the modernization of reserve forces. In addition, deliveries of U.S. equipment to Israel during the Arab-Israeli war had worsened materiel shortfalls (see chapter 8). Taking prior-year programs and basic FY 1974 requirements into account, McClary estimated that MASF funding had already exceeded the $1.126 billion ceiling. Add-ons, therefore, would have to be funded by pruning programs elsewhere.[36]

The defense attaché's request exacerbated the problem imposed by the $1.126 billion MASF ceiling. In March 1974 McClary pleaded to Mahon's defense appropriations subcommittee for relief, noting that DoD was "essentially stopping" all MASF obligations until the matter got resolved. "We must have relief or we must stop support," he wrote, "That is the choice." Congress, however, was not swayed. On April 4 the House rejected the administration's request to raise the ceiling on FY 1974 MASF funds for South Vietnam and Laos by $474 million by a 177–154 vote. The administration had expected the House, generally more supportive than the Senate of continued military aid for South Vietnam and Laos, to approve the additional obligation authority. But opponents in the House argued persuasively that military aid was sufficient and the additional money afforded by a higher MASF ceiling would be better spent at home. The vote provided clear political evidence of weakening public support for South Vietnam after the withdrawal of U.S. troops.[37]

After the House declined to raise the FY 1974 ceiling, Senator Stennis's Armed Services Committee stepped forward in an attempt to give the Pentagon relief. The committee agreed with a DoD finding that it had mistakenly applied $266 million in outlays from 1972 and 1973 to FY 1974 and proposed that the department subtract that amount from the amount obligated during the fiscal year to date—giving it additional spending authority without having to raise the $1.126 billion ceiling. But on May 6, 1974, the full Senate rejected the committee's proposal by a 43–38 vote. In debate Stennis had defended the additional spending that would be allowed under the proposal as "an obligation to an ally," but Senator Edward M. "Ted" Kennedy (D-MA) proved more persuasive in leading the opposition. He called the proposal a "bookkeeper's sleight of hand" and charged that giving DoD the authority to dispense more aid to South Vietnam and Laos without breaking the MASF ceiling would perpetuate discredited policies in Indochina. With the votes, both houses of the U.S. Congress had dealt the Nixon administration a major setback and presaged further difficulties for the Thieu government.[38]

Sticking to the $1.126 billion ceiling meant making cuts in service budgets. In May 1974 Schlesinger ordered the Army to cancel or defer contracts to procure $160 million in ammunition for South Vietnam. The Air Force received similar orders to stop the purchase of 71 F-5E aircraft and to defer procurement and depot maintenance of engines as well as aircraft communications and electronic components. The Joint Chiefs unsuccessfully challenged the decision, arguing that canceling the purchase of F-5Es would reduce South Vietnam's capability to handle the enemy threat and possibly send "a negative political signal" to North Vietnam.[39]

The shortage of FY 1974 funds also effectively ended the president's policy of one-for-one replacement of RVNAF combat losses. At the end of May, Admiral Moorer advised Schlesinger that the South Vietnamese government had been maintaining equipment stocks

beyond what were necessary for its military force structure and support requirements, and that one-for-one replacement had led to "an unnecessary expenditure" of U.S. funds by replacing ARVN equipment from U.S. stocks when Saigon had enough materiel to replace much of what its forces were losing in combat. The chairman recommended "a more flexible policy" for replacing RVNAF armaments, munitions, and war materiel. Arthur I. Mendolia, assistant defense secretary for installations and logistics, concurred with Moorer's assessment and in late June recommended that Schlesinger proceed with "selective replacement" of South Vietnamese losses without seeking a formal change in the policy from the White House. Schlesinger agreed and endorsed a less ambitious practice of selective replacement. He did so without seeking White House approval.[40]

On July 17, 1974, as the Nixon impeachment drama neared its climax, the WSAG met to consider Saigon's near-term prospects and ensure that all agencies were giving full support to the preservation of South Vietnam. In Kissinger's view, the United States could not walk away from its commitment to the Thieu government and write off the 50,000 U.S. lives lost defending South Vietnam. He added "the only thing that could cause the demise of the South was the lack of American support." DCI William Colby asserted that the North could never succeed at "knocking over" South Vietnam so long as the United States continued its support at 1974 levels. He noted that 40,000 North Vietnamese soldiers had been killed in the South during the past year and a million had been killed over the previous 9–10 years—staggering losses for a nation of 20 million. If North Vietnam did launch an offensive, Kissinger and General George Brown (who had just become chairman of the Joint Chiefs on July 1) supported moving a carrier back into the Tonkin Gulf. Ambassador Martin also spoke of preserving South Vietnamese confidence in continued U.S. support. Discussion centered not on South Vietnam's progress, or assuring its

success, or even fixing its military weaknesses, but rather on holding on—preserving the status quo in Vietnam with U.S. aid. Kissinger said South Vietnam's survival was "vital to the other things we are doing in the foreign policy field throughout the world." Left undiscussed was the country's status over the long term. Was aid to be given in perpetuity, or would it end at some indeterminate date after Hanoi ceased its long struggle to unify Vietnam?[41]

Three weeks and one day after this meeting Nixon announced his intention to resign. His departure on August 9 called into question the value of his earlier pledges of support for South Vietnam. That same day the new president, Gerald Ford, sent Thieu a reassuring message, stressing the continuity of the U.S. commitment: "American foreign policy has always been marked by its essential continuity and its essential bipartisan nature…The existing commitments this nation has made in the past are still valid and will be fully honored in my administration." Alluding to congressional actions that reduced economic and military assistance to Vietnam, Ford stated, "Although it may take a little time, I do want to reassure you of my confidence that in the end our support will be adequate." His language was vague, however, and the political situation that had hampered Nixon's aid requests on Capitol Hill had not abated. It was unclear whether the unelected new president, even with his deep roots in the House, could move a reluctant Congress.[42]

On the day Ford took office, the intelligence community provided a sobering assessment of the military situation in Vietnam—the communists were preparing for large-scale warfare. North Vietnam had rebuilt its army into a force capable of launching "major or all-out attacks on short notice," leaving South Vietnam more vulnerable to attack than before the Paris agreement. Should North Vietnam perceive that U.S. support was weakening, it concluded, "they may opt for heavier action to make major gains."[43]

With the growing opposition to the war, even maintaining even a zero-growth level of support for South Vietnam and Laos looked doubtful. Following the fight with Congress over the $1.126 billion aid ceiling for FY 1974, the administration requested $1.45 billion for MASF for FY 1975—an increase, Kissinger told Ford, that was primarily intended to offset the effects of inflation. Congress balked, authorizing only $1 billion in the FY 1975 defense authorization act. Even that amount was too much for the House and Senate appropriators, who voted only $700 million ($300 million shy of what the defense authorization had allowed). A $700 million ceiling would reduce ammunition support to less than half the recommended level; lower petroleum-oil-lubricant (POL) support to about one-third of the required level; and eliminate investments in other essential materiel. In August 1974 defense attaché Murray advised that this level of funding would force South Vietnam to make unpalatable choices. Seven hundred million in funding would not allow South Vietnam's armed forces to defend the entire country against even a low level of enemy activity. The RVNAF could only protect Saigon and the Mekong River Delta. Then, in mid-August, Deputy Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs Tom C. Korologos warned Scowcroft and White House counsellor John Marsh, "We will be lucky to hold to the House figure of $700 million." He wanted the new president to plead with to Congress not to "handcuff him with massive Defense and troop cuts—in his first week in Office."[44]

That same month Schlesinger warned Senator McClellan that further reductions would wreck "all prospects for a negotiated settlement." The secretary wrote to Representative Mahon in the same vein several weeks later. Unmoved, Congress appropriated only $700 million for FY 1975. On October 9 President Ford signed the DoD FY 1975 appropriation act, but in doing so noted that $700 million in funding for South Vietnam was inadequate to meet its critical needs if

"South Vietnam's enemies continue to press their attacks." Should circumstances change, he vowed to approach Congress early in 1975 for more funding.[45]

In September Kissinger urged the president to request a supplemental appropriation of $300 million, raising the total to $1 billion, an amount that the DoD and U.S. Embassy estimated as necessary for South Vietnam to muster a defense. On September 12 the president met with a bipartisan group of legislators to press for additional funding for South Vietnam. "We must have what we need," Ford stressed, adding that U.S. efforts in Vietnam should not be undone by a lack of funding or restrictions on the use of those funds. Abandoning Vietnam "would affect our whole foreign policy and the reliance that countries can place on us," Kissinger added. Even worse, cutting back assistance only encouraged Hanoi to take military action. Despite the administration's urgent entreaties, Representatives Wayne Hays (D-OH) and Elford A. Cederberg (R-MI) said that the administration would have to wait until the November elections before Congress would act.[46]

Intelligence assessments in the fall of 1974 undercut the urgency of the administration's pleas for more money. The intelligence community agreed that North Vietnam probably would not mount a 1972-type offensive between October 1974 and May 1975. Despite expecting some stepped-up military action by North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, the agencies did not foresee a critical military situation. However, South Vietnam's forces remained vulnerable should Hanoi launch an all-out offensive. Saigon's forces would face serious reverses and require massive U.S. logistical support to prevent a decisive defeat.[47]

After conferring with South Vietnamese officials in early October, Deputy Secretary Clements told Schlesinger that "Thieu and his military leaders have a firm hold on reality" but their morale was "seriously strained" by aid reductions imposed by Congress. He noted that

logistical advances had further improved communist positions in South Vietnam, and that Thieu wanted to step up RVNAF ammunition usage on the chance Ford could persuade Congress to approve more funding to replenish stocks (Clements reported urging Thieu not to do so). Barring a major North Vietnamese offensive Saigon, Clements thought South Vietnamese forces could get through the year with the $700 million Congress had appropriated, but they would be "dangerously weakened" by the end of the year. "We will have to constantly hold Vietnamese hands," he concluded, "Psychologically they [the South Vietnamese] are very fragile."[48]

To support the case for a supplemental, in December 1974 Clements sent Kissinger an analysis showing that the RVNAF was expending less ammunition than it had before the cease-fire even though combat was scarcely less frequent or intense. South Vietnamese consumption of ground ammunition ran at half of the pre-ceasefire rate and air ammunition at approximately three-quarters. South Vietnamese forces were also consuming significantly fewer POL materials. Should intense fighting recur, the deputy secretary advised, ammunition and POL resupply for the RVNAF during the first 90 days would cost between $130 million and $170 million. Complicating matters further, Assistant Defense Secretary (ISA) Robert Ellsworth wrote, was the fact that South Vietnam also had to contend with a precipitous decline in real income and still-pervasive corruption.[49]

Rather than having a "firm hold on reality," however, Thieu and his generals misunderstood the U.S. political scene and overestimated the amount of support the United States would be able or willing to provide. Ambassador Martin made it more difficult for South Vietnamese leaders to appreciate the U.S political situation by ordering General Murray to avoid explaining the broader aid problem (beyond ammunition and POL) to South Vietnamese commanders. Martin optimistically clung to the view that the president's pledges of support

would somehow be honored. Murray expressed alarm that U.S aid would not continue at the same level as it had before the cease-fire. Murray had wanted to urge the South Vietnamese to begin using supplies more conservatively to avoid a future crisis, but Martin felt this would shock South Vietnam's leaders. As a consequence, the South Vietnamese military continued to requisition and expend supplies at their normal rate, unaware of the severe reductions looming.[50]

Thieu compounded his difficulties by adhering to his uncompromising "Four Nos" policy—no negotiating with the enemy, no communist activity in the South, no coalition government, and no surrender of territory—after the peace agreement was signed. His policy not only conflicted with the peace agreement, but also set South Vietnam on a course of military action it could ill afford when American military assistance began to decline. Moreover, Thieu's refusal to consolidate his territorial control to more defensible areas would prove critical in 1974 and 1975. His desire to hold all territory would spread his forces thinly across the country, diminishing his ability to maintain a mobile reserve to use in strategically important areas.[51]

Cambodia

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong base areas inside Cambodia represented a serious threat to Cambodia and South Vietnam. A joint U.S.-South Vietnamese incursion into Cambodia in 1970 had temporarily forced the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong away from the border but failed to end the military threat to Saigon and Phnom Penh. North Vietnam kept its bases and withdrew no troops from Cambodia, leaving Cambodia's weak government and military utterly dependent on continued American aid. Despite the cease-fire agreement, the situation in Cambodia changed little after January 1973. Fighting between the Khmer Rouge, an indigenous communist force, and the U.S.-backed government of President Lon Nol continued, but the Cooper-Church

Amendment, passed after the 1970 incursion, prohibited U.S. ground combat troops and advisers from entering Cambodia. The Cambodians and the U.S. Air Force suspended offensive operations on January 28, 1973, but Nixon and Kissinger, viewing airpower as their only military leverage against the communists, resumed airstrikes on February 8. Between April 29 and May 5, 1973, the United States mounted 1,146 tactical air raids and 390 B-52 sorties in Cambodia, dropping 10,144 tons of ordnance.[52]

Despite the bombing, long-term prospects for the U.S.-friendly Cambodian government were unfavorable. President Lon Nol was ailing and his government faction-ridden and ineffective. Cambodia's Force Armee Nationale Khmer (FANK), inexperienced and ill-equipped, was no match for the Khmer Rouge. Cambodia's forces received U.S. equipment and munitions, but poor morale, insufficient training, and incompetent leadership sapped combat efficiency. Early in May 1973 the Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that the FANK was not "ready or able to regain the initiative, much less recover the territory lost during the past three years."[53]

Nixon and Kissinger saw the bombing as necessary support to the Lon Nol government and essential to enforcing the January cease-fire. But in spring and early summer 1973 Congress, reflecting the public's war weariness and outrage over Watergate, took unprecedented steps to cut off funds for all military operations in and over Indochina. A 1973 stalemate in Congress resulted in the Military Assistance Program for Cambodia being funded through a continuing resolution. The White House had sought to transfer about $175 million in MAP funding for operations in Cambodia, but the request quickly ran into trouble. After canvassing Capitol Hill, Assistant Defense Secretary for Legislative Affairs John O. Marsh warned Secretary Richardson on May 2 that he was "worried about the firmness of the administration's support in Congress for

Cambodia." Two days later, by a narrow margin, the House blocked a transfer of funds. Richardson's request to the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 7 also met a hostile reception. Democratic Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri did more than block a transfer; he proposed to amend the FY 1973 supplemental appropriation bill and cut off all funds for bombing. On May 15 the Appropriations Committee unanimously approved it, and on May 31 the Senate passed the Eagleton Amendment by a 63–19 vote, denying funds for military operations in or over Cambodia and Laos.[54]

The House approved the amendment, but then narrowly sustained Nixon's veto. It was a Pyrrhic victory for the administration. The House and Senate attached cutoff provisions to a continuing resolution needed to fund government agencies after the fiscal year ended on June 30 and to a bill raising the ceiling on the national debt. Seeing the strength of congressional opposition, Nixon and Kissinger entered negotiations aimed at extending the bombing as long as possible before Congress imposed its will. August 15 proved to be the best the administration could achieve. Both houses voted on June 30 to set an August 15 deadline for ending all U.S. military activity in Cambodia as part of the Second Supplemental Appropriations Act for FY 1973. It prohibited any use of funds after that date to "support directly or indirectly combat operations in or over Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam and South Vietnam." This prohibition began shortly after Schlesinger became defense secretary on July 2. The new secretary would have to contend with an immediate, full-blown funding problem.[55]

After U.S. airstrikes ended in Cambodia, the FANK's pace of operations rose dramatically as it defended Phnom Penh from a Khmer Rouge offensive. Supplying the FANK with ammunition was the most pressing problem. In mid-August 1973 Admiral Moorer advised Schlesinger of an urgent request from the commander in chief, Pacific Command for $9.3

million in additional MAP funds by August 20 to maintain ammunition depot stocks at a 30-day level through September 1973. The JCS chairman believed the next few weeks might prove decisive for Cambodia's survival and have ramifications for the survival of South Vietnam.[56]

On September 8 Schlesinger asked the chairmen of the Senate Appropriations and Armed Services Committees to support legislation transferring up to $150 million worth of ammunition from theater stocks prepositioned in Thailand, Okinawa, and Japan to the FANK. Senator Stuart Symington vigorously objected. He saw the transfer as a bid to circumvent the Foreign Relations Committee, which sought to regain jurisdiction over military aid and curtail the proliferation of sources for foreign aid. If the need was urgent, Symington suggested the department defer other requirements. He lamented that the executive branch enjoyed so much discretion in administering foreign aid that it could find a way to do "pretty much what it wanted to do in this field" and told Schlesinger that he believed the administration would find some way to get additional ammunition to Cambodia. He was proven correct on October 2 when Schlesinger informed Kissinger that 20,000–50,000 tons of excess ammunition could be moved from Laos, noting, "We can keep the ammunition flowing for a long time but we need façade…. [T]here will be no paperwork. It will just be done."[57]

On October 16 Admiral Moorer advised Schlesinger of the ammunition stocks he thought Cambodia would need to survive the approaching dry season. The JCS chairman calculated requirements for the second quarter at $80.3 million, but committing that amount to Cambodia would terminate MAP efforts elsewhere. President Nixon agreed more assistance was needed and included a request for $200 million in grant aid for Cambodia when he asked Congress on October 19 to authorize emergency assistance of $2.2 billion in grants and credits for Israel, then at war with Egypt and Syria (see chapter 8). Combining the two requests helped to ensure the

extra funding for Cambodia. Moorer believed FANK could resist, if given manpower and equipment, but he acknowledged that weak leadership and a lack of national support were undermining the government.[58]

Although the $200 million in grant aid raised the FY 1974 ceiling on the Cambodian MAP to $325 million, in early February 1974 Moorer advised Schlesinger that the amount was insufficient. The minimum required was $395.5 million, more than three-quarters of it for ammunition. Schlesinger asked the Joint Chiefs for proposals to improve the Cambodian air force. Given funding limitations, the most the Joint Chiefs could recommend was to provide 24 more T-28s, five AC-47 gunships, and to bolster the navy with riverine craft.[59]

Prospects for Cambodian funding remained grim. In early June 1974 Moorer cautioned Schlesinger that in the first half of FY 1975 MAP might again have to be funded through a continuing resolution, setting a level that met only the FANK's most essential requirements. There was no assurance this course would result in either military victory or negotiated settlement. Sharp U.S. inflation meant $500 million would be needed in FY 1975 to provide enough aid to keep pace with FY 1974 levels. In the Senate, a consensus was building to cap overall assistance to Cambodia at $347 million, with a $200 million ceiling on MAP. When Schlesinger testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June 1974, Senator Fulbright characterized fighting in Cambodia as "a civil war in which we intervened." Why, he asked, was the outcome so important to the United States? Schlesinger countered that the United States had long been involved: "We are not dealing with a blank slate in Southeast Asia. We cannot go back to 1963 or 1965 as if the record of the last decade did not exist…. I think that the national interest flows from this prior history." His answer failed to sway Fulbright and other critics.[60]

Returning to Washington for consultations in September 1974, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia John Gunther Dean briefed Schlesinger. He characterized the $200 million ceiling on military assistance as a "stranglehold." Policymakers, however, could not find any new solutions. At year's end, the Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that the Cambodian regime's ability to survive was dependent "not so much on its military performance as on whether the rapidly unraveling economy can be checked and a semblance of political stability maintained." Since time worked in the Khmer Rouge's favor, "the [Cambodian] government's only hope is to obtain an early solution through a negotiated settlement." Several times during 1974 the U.S. government had tried to open talks based on the formula of a cease-fire, Lon Nol's departure, and the formation of a coalition. But diplomatic probes in China, Algeria, Malaysia, and Indonesia made not the slightest headway. Ominously, during fall 1974, North Vietnam began sending large quantities of weapons and munitions to the Khmer Rouge.[61]

The disclosure in July 1973 of the secret U.S. bombing campaign in Cambodia, nicknamed Menu, presented an additional obstacle to the Nixon administration's policy. Under Menu, the Air Force mounted 3,875 secret sorties and dropped more than 108,000 tons of ordnance in Cambodia between March 1969 and March 1970. The campaign ended in May 1970. At the start, the White House had informed a small group of representatives and senators of the secret bombing. In 1974, at the climax of the Watergate investigation, House members introduced bills of impeachment that included the secret bombing of Cambodia among Nixon's offenses. In late July, by a 26–12 vote, the House Judiciary Committee rejected that charge. As Representative William S. Cohen (R-ME) argued, many members of Congress had known about the bombing and explicitly or implicitly supported it at the time.[62]

Losing Ground in Laos

Prospects for peace in Laos were no better than they had in Vietnam or Cambodia. For years the United States had supported the Royal Laotian Government against the Pathet Lao (Laotian communists) and North Vietnamese forces in Laos. This involved intensive bombing of communist forces, infiltration routes, and bases in the small, landlocked nation. Washington also supported 30 battalions of Thai Special Guerrilla Units (SGUs) in Laos and relied on them as a contingency force to support the Royal Lao Government. The Laos cease-fire agreement signed on February 21, 1973, required all foreign forces to leave Laotian territory within 60 days once a coalition government formed (as happened nearly 14 months later, on April 5, 1974). Meanwhile, congress, reflecting the U.S. public's fatigue with war in Southeast Asia, mandated that the SGU program terminate by the end of June 1974 (the end of FY 1974). This put the Nixon administration, weakened by Watergate, on yet another collision course with congress. The president wanted all 30 battalions to stay within Laos, fully manned, for as long as possible to help force North Vietnamese compliance with the cease-fire. Legislators had other plans.[63]

During his brief tenure defense secretary Richardson recognized the political impossibility of maintaining 30 fully-manned SGU battalions. In early April 1973 he informed Kissinger that with available resources DoD could sustain 15 full-strength battalions during the first half of FY 1974 and nine during the year's second half. The Pentagon had $20 million it could devote to the task. Speaking for President Nixon, Kissinger responded that all 30 SGU battalions had to be maintained at a "combat effective" level until North Vietnamese forces withdrew from Laos under the terms of the cease-fire agreement. The defense secretary knew that doing this, even for a limited time, would take far more than $20 million. He advised

Kissinger that it would mean depending on congress to approve the full $107.3 million designated for the SGUs in the administration's already-prepared FY 1974 budget request—approval the secretary knew would be "virtually impossible" to secure.[64]

Nixon and Kissinger yielded to the political reality as Richardson had laid it out. In mid-June the president backed off maintaining 30 SGU battalions and instead directed DoD to maintain 17 in the first half of FY 1974 and draw down to 10 during the year's second half. He expected that this level of support, slightly higher than what the secretary had proposed, could be covered by the $20 million DoD had available. Deputy Secretary Clements, who handled the issue after Richardson's May 1973 departure, agreed in September that resources were sufficient for 10 battalions through the end of FY 1974. But he also thought about the future. The Laotian parties had so far failed to form the coalition government that would trigger the 60-day deadline for foreign forces to withdraw from the country. Clements believed it unlikely that North Vietnam would withdraw its troops from Laos in accordance with the 60-day deadline, whenever that clock started ticking. He suggested that if the Laotian parties failed to form a government before the SGU program ended at the close of FY 1974, it would be worth trying to persuade a skeptical congress to extend it into the next fiscal year. But in December congress foreclosed this and any other options the administration might devise for Laos. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1973, enacted on December 17, prohibited the U.S. government from using any funds "to finance military or paramilitary operations by the United States in or over Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia."[65]

All that remained was to plan and execute the SGUs' withdrawals. In March 1974 President Nixon directed the secretary of defense, the secretary of state, and the director of central intelligence to ensure that the ten remaining SGUs came out of Laos between April 15

and June 30, 1974—and sooner (within 60 days) if the Lao coalition government took shape before May 1. The formation of the Lao Provisional Government of National Union on April 5 finally fixed the withdrawal date for foreign forces as June 5. Two days before that deadline the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that Hanoi had removed only one regiment from Laos. It was just the sort of North Vietnamese inaction Clements had feared. Communist forces controlled two-thirds of Laos and about one-third of its people. Forces loyal to the Laotian government were confined to the Mekong Valley and narrow strips of territory along the Burmese and Thai borders, making it difficult to shield the government from the stronger more flexible communist faction. The Defense Intelligence Agency in fact concluded in May 1974 that there was "a good chance of the Government of Laos coming under increasing Communist influence, if not domination, within the next two or three years." [66]

By the end of 1974 the situation in Southeast Asia was worrisome. At stake was the possible failure of the U.S. political, diplomatic, and military effort, stretching back to the 1950s, to keep the nations of Southeast Asia out of communist control. U.S. funding had declined sharply as public support plummeted, with little prospect of an increase to the minimum levels that the administration believed were necessary. The cease-fire did not work as its framers had intended. While South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos struggled to maintain force levels and readiness without a U.S. military presence, communist forces in those countries grew in strength and capability. Cambodia and Laos had especially weak governments with little popular support. The government in Saigon was certainly stronger than that of the other U.S allies, but was beset by fundamentally weak leadership and corruption. The spreading Watergate scandal and surging antiwar sentiment in Congress made it more difficult for the White House and DoD to

compensate for the weaknesses of U.S. allies in Southeast Asia, and prevented the Nixon and Ford administrations from responding with full force. The combination of Nixon's diminished authority and will, along with unyielding domestic political opposition, made it impossible to carry out the military strikes that Kissinger believed an unfettered Nixon would have approved.

North Vietnam was ready to take advantage. In November 1974 new intelligence indicated that communists were indeed preparing for a dry-season offensive. The Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) called for widespread, intensive operations starting in December 1974 and running through June 1975. The goal would be to defeat the rural pacification program in South Vietnam and bring about the conditions for total victory in 1976. DIA analysts concluded that these instructions did not indicate Hanoi's commitment of its strategic reserve forces to an all-out offensive.[67]

Senior U.S. officials looked ahead with growing unease. Reacting to reports from Saigon of internal turmoil, in late October 1974 Schlesinger asked the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs about Thieu's ability to survive. Assistant Secretary Ellsworth sought to reassure him, observing that the CIA, DIA, and U.S. Embassy all considered the domestic situation to be under control. Yet Ellsworth added a worrying note. There was no denying that Thieu faced "fantastic problems," and added, "His major ally is cutting back on aid, real income has declined precipitously, and corruption is still pervasive." After the Paris Accords, President Nixon had directed the DoD to increase its purchase of Vietnamese piasters with dollars, hoping to provide the foreign exchange necessary to sustain Saigon's economy. But South Vietnam's import-dependent economy was vulnerable to changes in the global economy, particularly large price hikes on imported oil. More expensive fuel adversely impacted South Vietnam militarily and politically. The combination of higher fuel costs, rampant inflation, and

the decline in U.S. assistance proved debilitating to South Vietnam's economy, society, and the armed forces. As 1975 dawned it was unclear whether increased American financial and military support could prevail against North Vietnam's determination to unify Vietnam under its rule.[68]

Endnotes

[1]. Thayer, *How to Analyze a War Without Fronts*, 104, 105.

2. Hunt, *Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military*, 1, 247; for a detailed discussion of Vietnamization, see Jeffrey J. Clarke, *Advice and Support, The Final Years 1965–1973* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988).

3. The complete agreement is printed in Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007), 397–438. Bruce Palmer Jr., *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 130. Two very different accounts of the Paris agreement are Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor* (New York: Free Press, 2001), and Gareth Porter, *A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

4. Memo, Haldeman for Kissinger, 25 Jan 1973, folder HAK/Presidential Memos 1971–, box 341, Subject Files, NSC, Nixon Library.

5. Dale Van Atta, *With Honor: Melvin Laird in War, Peace, and Politics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 467–468.

6. *Victory in Vietnam, The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954–1975*, The Military History Institute of Vietnam, trans by Merle L. Pribbenow (Manhattan: University Press of Kansas, 2002); 333; Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986), 297–298; Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval: An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End* (New York: Random House, 1977), 55.

7. Ltr, Nixon to Thieu, 5 Jan 1973, reprinted in Nguyen Tien Hung and Jerrold Schecter, *The Palace File* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 392. This book discusses the numerous exchanges between Nixon and Thieu. For more on Thieu's resistance, see also Larry Berman*, No Peace, No Honor* and *FRUS 1969–1976*, vol. 9, *Vietnam, October 1972-January 1973*, ed. John M. Carland (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010).

8. James Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War* (Manhattan: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 174–175; Hunt, *Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military*, 246–247; Webb and Poole, *JCS and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 213–222; William Le Gro, *Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 17; Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 49 (quote).

9. Le Gro, *Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation*, 18; Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 188–189.

10. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam,* 186–187; Le Gro, *Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation*, 18–19; Walter Scott Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace: Implementing the Paris Peace Accords, Vietnam 1973* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1982), 23; Bernard C. Nalty, *Air War over South Vietnam 1968–1975* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2000), 403; Palmer, *The 25-Year War*, 131. Martin was sworn in June 24, 1973.

11. Territorial Forces served regional and local security functions and had a similar relationship to the ARVN as Reserve and National Guard forces have to the regular military in the United States. Almost always poorly resourced, they were made up of Regional Forces (numbering approximately 325,000 in early 1973) and Popular Forces (around 200,000 in early 1973). See Spencer C. Tucker, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 675–678. For force levels, see Le Gro, Vietnam f*rom Cease-Fire to Capitulation*, 29–30, and Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 188.

12. Memo, Richardson for Kissinger, 17 Mar 1973, folder Viet 091.112 1973, box 8, Acc 330-78-0002; memo, Kissinger for Richardson, 29 Mar 1973, folder Viet 400 1973, box 90, Acc 330-78-0001.

13. Msg, COMUSMACV to JCS, 070930Z Mar 1973, folder Viet 320.2 (73), box 9, Acc 330-78-0002.

14. ISA Fact Sheet, COMUSMACV's Personal Assessment of RVNAF, 8 Mar 1973, folder Viet 320.2 (73), box 9, Acc 330-78-0002.

15. Hearings, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1974*, 3, 4, and 5 Apr 1973, pt.1, reproduced in *Public Statements of Elliot Richardson, Secretary of Defense, 1973*, OSD Historical Office, 3:916, 918.

16. Isaacs, *Without Honor*, 84; Le Gro, *Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation*, 32; Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 192; Allan E. Goodman, *The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War* (Palo Alto, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 165–180, reprinted in Robert J. McMahon, ed., *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War: Documents and Essays* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1995), 582–586.

[17]. Snepp, *Decent Interval*, 92–93; Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 190–191; John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945–1975* (Manhattan: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 518–519; Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History, 1946–1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 735–738; Sir Robert Thompson, *Peace Is Not at Hand* (New York: David McKay Company, 1974), 137.

18. WSAG, meeting minutes, 23 Feb 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, vol. 10, *Vietnam, January 1973-July 1975*, ed. Bradley L. Coleman (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 132–135 (doc 23); Webb and Poole, *JCS and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 337 (quote); Michael Getler, "S.E. Asian Arms Limits Seen," *Washington Post*, 2 Mar 1975.

19. Webb and Poole, *JCS and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 334–336; CM-2533-73 to SecDef, 5 Mar 1973, folder Viet (North) 320.2, box 9, Acc 330-78-0002.

20. Memo, SecDef to Kissinger, 10 Mar 1973, folder Viet (North) 320.2, box 9, Acc 330-78-0002.

21. Memo, Kissinger for Nixon, 14 Mar 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:144–147 (doc 29).

22. Memcon, 16 Mar 1973, National Security Adviser's Memoranda of Conversation Collection, Ford Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1552568.pdf.

23. Conversation between Nixon and Scowcroft, 20 Mar 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:157–161 (doc 34).

24. Quoted in Isaacs, *Without Honor*, 135.

25. Dean quoted in Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Manhattan: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 281.

26. Memo, Richardson for Nixon, 31 Mar 1973, untitled folder, box 90, Acc 330-78-0001.

[27]. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 75–76, 324–326; Webb and Poole, *JCS and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 340.

[28]. WSAG, meeting minutes, 16 Apr 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:189–197 (doc 42).

[29]. WSAG, meeting minutes, 17 Apr 1973, FRUS 1969–1976, 10:197–207 (doc 43); Webb and Poole, *JCS and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 341.

30. Memo, Richardson for Nixon, 19 Apr 1973, folder Viet 385.1 (Feb-) 1973, box 90, Acc 330-78-0001; *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954–1975* (Manhattan: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 338–339, 348–351; MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 29 Aug 1973, box TS-4, Schlesinger Papers.

31. NIE 53/14.3-73, 12 Oct 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:448–449 (doc 111); memo, de Poix for Schlesinger, 20 Nov 1973, folder Viet/North/381 1973, box 9, Acc 330-78-0002; memo, Marshall for Schlesinger, 21 Dec 1973; DJSM-2050-73 for Marshall, 19 Dec 1973; memo, Director PA&E for Schlesinger, 11 Dec 1973: all in folder Viet 092.2 (Jun–) 1973, box 86, Acc 330-78-0001; Isaacs, *Without Honor*, 145 (quote); Le Gro, *Cease-fire to Capitulation*, 80–83.

32. Memo, Acting ASD(Comptroller) Brazier for Richardson, 12 Feb 1973; ltr, Richardson to Ash, 28 Feb 1973: both in folder 110.01 (Feb) 1973; memos, Brazier for Richardson, 1, 15, and 30 Mar 1973: all in folder 110.01 (Mar–) 1973; Fact Sheet, ASD (Comptroller), "FY 1973 Southeast Asia Funding," 24 Apr 1973; ltr, Richardson to McClellan, 11 May 1973: both in folder 110.01 (Apr-May) 1973: all in box 20, Acc 330-78-0001.

33. FY 1974 MASF, 20 Aug 1973, folder Laos 1973, box 72; ltr, Schlesinger to Stennis, 27 Sep 1973, folder Viet 091.3 1973, box 85: both in Acc 330-78-0001.

34. Ltr, Clements to Senator McClellan, 14 Dec 1973, folder Chron File-December 1973, box 3, Acc 330-80-0034.

35. Memo, Acting ASD(ISA) for Schlesinger, 21 Dec 1973, folder Viet 091.3 1973, box 85; memo, ASD (Comptroller) for Clements, 7 Jan 1974, folder Viet 091.3 1974, box 77: both in Acc 330-78-0001.

36. Memo, ASD(ISA) for Clements, 14 Dec 1973, w/attached Draft Memo to Kissinger and Clements's "Hold for now" notation, 22 Dec 1973, folder Viet 091.3 1973, box 85, Acc 330-78-0001.

[37]. Memo, ASD(Comptroller) for Ralph Preston, 25 Mar 1974, folder Chron File-March 1974, box 3, Acc 330-80-0034; John W. Finney, "House Bars Rise in Vietnam Aid," *New York Times*, 5 Apr 1974, 1.

38. Leslie H. Gelb, "Pentagon Error Will Aid Saigon," *New York Times,* 17 Apr 1974, 8; Finney, "Senate Rejects Vietnam Aid Rise," *New York Times*, 7 May 1974, 1.

39. Memo, Schlesinger for Secretaries of Military Departments, 23 May 1974, folder Viet 452 1974; JCSM-208-74 for Schlesinger, folder Viet 400 1974: both in box 79, Acc 330-78-0011.

40. JCSM-184-74 for Schlesinger, 28 May 1974; memo, ASD(I&L) for Schlesinger, 29 Jun 1974; memo, Schlesinger for CJCS, 16 Jul 1974: all in folder Viet 400 1974, Acc 330-78-0011.

41. Memo of record, WSAG Meeting on Indochina, 17 Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:531–533 (doc 131); Robert Dallek, *Partners in Power, Nixon and Kissinger* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 602–612.

42. Msg, State 174064 to Embassy Saigon, 9 Aug 1974, box 38, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, Ford Library, accessed 17 Jan 2016, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/vietnam/033200013-001.pdf.

43. Memo, Stearman for Kissinger, 9 Aug 74, box 18, Presidential Country Files, East Asia and the Pacific, Ford Library, accessed 17 Jan 2016, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/vietnam/032400069-001.pdf.

44. Memo, Korologos for Scowcroft and Marsh, 12 Aug 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:541 (doc 136) (quotes); Talking Paper, FY 75 Military Assistance to SVN, Effects of a $700 Million Ceiling, n.d. [Aug 1974], folder Viet 091.3 (Aug-Oct) 1974, box 77, Acc 330-78-0011.

45. Ltrs, Schlesinger to McClellan, 21 Aug 1974, and Mahon, 20 Sep 1974; folder Viet 091.3 (Aug-Oct) 1974, box 77, Acc 330-78-0011; Statement on Signing the DoD Appropriations Act, 1975, 9 Oct 1974, *Ford Public Papers 1974*, 244; NSSM 213, 22 Oct 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:572–574 (doc 150).

46. Memo, Kissinger for Ford, 9 Sep 1974, 556–561 (doc 143); memcon, 21 Aug 1974, 547–551 (doc 139); memcon, 12 Sep 1974, 561–564 (doc 144): all in *FRUS 1969–1976*, vol. 10.

47. NSSM 213, 22 Oct 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:572–573 (doc 150); Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, 18 Nov 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:575–576 (doc 152).

[48]. Memo, Clements for Schlesinger, 10 Oct 1974, folder Korea 337 1974, box 66, Acc 330-78-0011.

49. Memo, Clements for Kissinger, 6 Dec 1974, folder Viet 091.3 (Nov-Dec) 1974, box 77; memo, Acting ASD(ISA) for Schlesinger, 16 Dec 1974, and memo, Clements for CJCS 19 Dec 1974: both in folder Viet 381 (19 Dec 74), box 4; memo, Ellsworth for Schlesinger, 21 Oct 1974, folder Viet 000.1-381, box 77: all in Acc 330-78-0011.

50. Isaacs, *Without Honor*, 145–146.

51. Ibid., 139; Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 193.

52. See Hunt, *Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military* (chap. 6) for background information on the war in Cambodia; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 345–346, 351–354; Analysis of U.S. Air Operations in Southeast Asia, 4 Jun 1973, folder Viet 385.1 (Feb-) 1973, box 90, Acc 330-78-0001.

53. Memo to Holders of DIEM 7-73, 7 May 1973, folder Cambodia 000.1-299 1973, box 64; DIA Appraisal 17-73, The Cambodian War After Three Years: An Assessment, 20 Mar 1973, folder 399 1973, box 64; DIEM 7-73, Security Prospects in Cambodia, folder Cambodia 000.1-299 1973, box 64: all in Acc 330-78-0001.

54. *New York Times*, 3 Feb 1973, 61, 65; 6 Feb 1973, 9; memo, Marsh to Richardson, 2 May 1973, folder Cambodia 385.1 (May-) 1973, box 65, Acc 330-78-0001; *Hearings Before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, Second Supplemental Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1973*, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., pt. 2, 7 May 1973, 1980–2043; *New York Times*, 11 May 1973, 1, 9; 16 May 1973, 1, 5; 5 Jun 1973, 1; *New York Times*, 5 Jun 1973, 1; Richard Madden, "Senators Vote 63 to 19 to Shut Off All Funds," *New York Times*, 1 Jun 73, p 1.

55. Webb and Poole, *JCS and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*, 341; *New York Times*, 26 Jun 1973, 1; 27 Jun 1973, 1; 28 Jun 1973, 1; 29 Jun 1973, 1; and 30 Jun 1973, 1; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 357–359; Veto of the Supplemental Appropriations Bill, 27 Jun 1973, 621–622; Statement on Signing the Second Supplemental, 1 Jul 1973, 635–636; ltr, Nixon to the Speaker of the House, 3 Aug 1973, 686: all in *Nixon Public Papers 1973*.

56. DSAA, FY 74 MAP Funding for Cambodia, 20 Sep 1973; CM-2855-73 for SecDef, 15 Aug 1973: both in folder Cambodia 091.1 1973, box 64, Acc 330-78-0001.

57. Ltrs, Schlesinger to McClellan and Symington, 8 Sep 1973; ltr, Symington to Schlesinger, 11 Sep 1973: both in folder Cambodia 400-825 1973, box 65, Acc 330-78-0001 (Symington was also acting chairman of the Committee on Armed Services); memo, Kennedy to Kissinger, 20 Sep 1973, folder 4, box H-094, H Files, NSC, Nixon Library; ltr, Symington to Schlesinger, 1 Oct 1973, folder Cambodia 400-825 1973, box 65, Acc 330-78-0001; memo, Under SecState Tarr for SecState, 29 Sep 1973, folder Cambodia 091.3 1973, box 64, Acc 330-78-0001; WSAG, meeting minutes, 20 Sep 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:428–432 (doc 107); Memcon, Kissinger, Schlesinger et al., 2 Oct 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10: 446–447 (doc 110).

58. CM-2941-73 for SecDef, 16 Oct 1973, folder Cambodia 091.3 1973, box 64, Acc 330-78-0001. The second quarter's requirement was amended to $80.8 million in JCSM-457-73 for SecDef, 23 Oct 1973, ibid; *Nixon Public Papers 1973*, 884–886; memo, Clements for Kissinger, 2 Nov 1973, folder Cambodia 091.3 1973; SNIE 57-1-73, 5 Dec 1973, folder 399 1973: both in box 64, Acc 330-78-0001.

59. CM-3116-74 for Schlesinger, 15 Feb 1974, folder Cambodia 091.3 1974, box 59, Acc 330-78-0011; JCSM-517-73 for Schlesinger, 7 Dec 1973, folder Cambodia 091.3 1973, box 64, Acc 330-78-0001; memo, DepSecDef for CJCS, 14 Mar 1974, folder Cambodia 091.3 1974, box 59, Acc 330-78-0011.

60. CM-3258-74 for Schlesinger, 3 Jun 1974; memo, Acting ASD(ISA) for Schlesinger, 15 Jun 1974; memo, Clements for CJCS, 21 Jun 1974; JCSM-362-74 for Schlesinger, 28 Aug 1974: all in folder Cambodia 381 1974, box 59, Acc 330-78-0011; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Foreign Assistance Authorization: Hearings*, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 200–201.

61. Memcon, Dean and Schlesinger, 5 Sep 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:554–555 (doc 142); memo, ASD(ISA) for Schlesinger, 5 Sep 1974, folder Cambodia 000.1-299, box 59, Acc 330-78-0011; memo, Ellsworth for Schlesinger, 18 Sep 1974; memo, Wickham for Dep ATP/NSA, 1 Oct 1974; memo, Scowcroft for Wickham, 11 Nov 1974; memo, Wickham for Scowcroft, 14 Dec 1974: all in folder Cambodia 381 1974, box 59, Acc 330-78-0011; DIAIAPPR 163-74, 17 Dec 1974, folder Cambodia 300-399 1974, Acc 330-78-0011; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 511, 502.

62. The secret bombing of Cambodia is covered in Hunt, *Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military*, 143–152; Stanley Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate* (New York: Norton, 1992), 478, 529–530. Cohen served as secretary of defense from 1997 to 2001.

63. Memo, Richardson for Service Secretaries et al., 26 Mar 1973, folder Laos 100.54 (Jun) 1973, box 1, Acc 330-78-0002.

64. Memo, Richardson for Kissinger, 6 Apr 1973; memo, Kissinger to Richardson, 3 May 1973, folder Laos 381 1973, box 72, Acc 330-78-0001.

65. Memo, Richardson for Kissinger, 10 May 1973; memo, Kissinger for Acting SecDef and DCI, 18 Jun 1973: both in folder Laos 381 1973, box 72, Acc 330-78-0001; DIAAPPR 144-73, 1 Nov 1973, folder Laos 092.2 1973, box 72, Acc 330-78-0001. The $107.3 million allocated to the SGUs was deleted from the FY 1974 MASF for Laos, becoming available to cover deficiencies elsewhere caused by price increases and dollar devaluation. See ltrs, Clements to Senator McClellan et al., 25 Jun 1973; memo, Clements for Kissinger, 25 Sep 1973; memo, Kissinger for Clements et al., 15 Oct 1973: all in folder Laos 381 1973, box 72, Acc 330-78-0001.

66. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 501; memo, Kissinger for Schlesinger et al., 15 Mar 1974, folder Laos 381, box 66, Acc 330-78-0011; memo, de Poix for Schlesinger, 3 Jun 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:529–530 (doc 130); DIE FE 3-74, Prospects for Laos, 14 May 1974, folder Laos 092.2 1974, box 66, Acc 330-78-0011.

67. DIADIN 689-74, 21 Nov 1974 attached to memo, ASD(ISA) for Schlesinger, 29 Nov 1974, folder Viet 385 1974, box 79; Acc 330-78-0011.

68. Memo, Ellsworth for Schlesinger, 21 Oct 1974, cited in note 49; NSDM 210, 11 Apr 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:185–186 (doc 40); memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 10 Jul 1973, folder Viet 123 1973, box 87, Acc 330-78-0001; Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War* (New York: Random House, 1985), 490–494 and 507; Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, 7 Jan 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:594 (doc 157).