

did not satisfy Cambodian public opinion. The Cambodians strongly objected to North Vietnam's violation of their sovereignty. In a series of rapidly moving events in March 1970, demonstrations against North Vietnamese occupation of Cambodian territory led to the sacking of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong embassies in Phnom Penh. Within a matter of days the North Vietnamese were given forty-eight hours' notice to vacate the country. Tiring of Sihanouk's careful balancing act, the Cambodian Parliament voted unanimously to depose him. . . .

Throughout April we showed restraint while the Vietnamese communist forces ran rampant through Cambodia. Our total military aid delivered to Cambodia consisted of 3,000 rifles provided covertly. The communists did not show similar restraint; they made it clear that their sole objective was domination of Cambodia.

Finally, on April 30, I announced our decision to counter the communist offensive by attacking North Vietnamese-occupied base areas in Cambodia bordering on South Vietnam. Our principal purpose was to undercut the North Vietnamese invasion of that country so that Vietnamization and plans for the withdrawal of American troops could continue in South Vietnam. A secondary purpose was to relieve the military pressure exerted on Cambodia by the North Vietnamese forces that were rapidly overrunning it. The North Vietnamese had been occupying parts of eastern Cambodia for over five years and returned there after we left; in contrast we limited our stay to two months and advanced only to a depth of twenty-one miles. It is obvious to any unbiased observer who the aggressor was. . . .

The joint operations by the U.S. Army and ARVN wiped out huge stores of North Vietnamese equipment—15 million rounds of ammunition (a full year's supply), 14 million pounds of rice (four months' supply), 23,000 weapons (enough for seventy-four full-strength North Vietnamese battalions), and much more.

Thanks to this and the following year's Lam Son operation in Laos by the South Vietnamese forces, Hanoi was unable to stockpile enough supplies for a full-scale attack on South Vietnam until two years later—in 1972. Valuable time had been won with which to complete the task of Vietnamization. And even when the 1972 offensive came, it was weakest and easiest to contain from the direction of the sanctuaries in Cambodia, a testimony to the effectiveness of our measures. . . .

The 1972 Invasion

The American and South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia and Laos in 1970 and 1971 successfully prevented major North Vietnamese and Vietcong offensives in South Vietnam during those years and made it possible for the United States to continue to withdraw its forces on schedule.

By the spring of 1972 Hanoi recognized that it could not conquer South Vietnam through guerrilla war tactics, even with the help of conventional units, and that it could not win the support of the South Vietnamese people. There was no creditable way for Hanoi to claim any longer that the war in the South was a