Nixon In Cambodia Essay, Research Paper

Nixon in Cambodia Ever since 1970, Nixon and his associates have claimedthat the invasion of Cambodia at the end of April was a greatsuccess. This assessment has been widely accepted, howeverit is not accurate. The invasion not only was disatrous forCambodia, but it also had serious long-term effects onVietnamization and on the nature of the Nixon administrationitself. The way in which it was conducted broke rules ofgood policy making, ignored vital intelligence, anddisregarded political realities. According to William Shawcross, Congress was completelyignored, Nixon s reasons for doing such being personalvengeance (134-135). Apparently the Senate did not agreewith Nixon s two nominations to fill the Supreme Court,giving him much grief. Shawcross states that Nixon saw inCambodia the chance to restore his slighted authority (134). It was stated: The liberals are waiting to see Nixon let Cambodia go down the drain just the way Eisenhower let Cuba go down the drain (Shawcross 135). On February 9th, 1969, an NVA base was found just insideCambodia, General Creighton Abrahms attempted to convince thenew Nixon administration to carpet bomb the area(Carvin 1). In a memo to General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the US JointCHiefs of Staff, Creighton argued: (t)here is little likelihood of involving Cambodian nationals if the target boxes are placed carefully. Total bomber exposure over Cambodian territory would be less than one minute per sortie (Carvin 1). When Nixon saw thier idea, he quickly approved thebombing with the assistance of his national security advisorHenry Kissinger. As suggested by Kissinger, Nixon orderedthat the attacks occur in secret, and all attempts to exposethe bombing should be stopped (Carvin 1-2). General Wheelerinformed his staff: In the event press inquiries are received following the execution of the Breakfast Plan as to whether or not US B-52s have struck in Cambodia, US spokesman will confirm that B-52s did strike on routine missions adjacent to the Cambodian border but state that he has no details and will look into the question (Shawcross 22). On March 9th, fortyeight boxeswere carpet bombed, the USconducting 3630 B-52 bombing raids in Cambodia over the next14 months(Carvin 2). Once the decision had been made inprinciple that Communist violations of Cambodia s neutralityjustified aggressive recriprocal action, it was not difficultto repeat the performance (Shawcross 26). Even though Kissinger stated that it was the bombing ofNorth Vietnamese in Cambodia and not Cambodia itself, secrecywas still a high priority. In April and May of that yearthere were several small references in the press concerningthe bombings of the border, but for some reason was notdeemed a major story. Despite the relative success of theadministration s news moratorium , Henry Kissinger wasenraged because of the minor breech(Carvin 2-3). In reflection he concluded that Mort Halperin, an aide

on the National Security Council staff, had leaked theinformation. In response, Kissinger removed Halperin fromthe loop and arranged FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover to wiretapHalperin s home. The Halperin tap being the first ofnumerous administration-sanctioned, illegal wiretaps(Carvin3). Nixon s Vietnamization, the helping of South Vietnam,never went according to plan. It took more time thanoriginally thought, taking 4 years and 26,000 more Americanlives, as well as hundreds of thousands of Vietnamesecasualties(Williams and others 226). Despite massiveanti-war protests, polls revealed that about 58% of thenation approved his policies (Williams and others 226). It was not until almost one year later that Nixonsuddenly announced that the US and South Vietnamese troopswere invading Cambodia to clean out the North Vietnamesecamps and to perhaps even capture a key Communistheadquarters(which was never found) (Williams and others283). However once he began to bomb, his reasoning came underimmediate scrutiny from US experts on southeast Asia, whoused history as a weapon against his policies. None of thebombing created the effect desired, no Communist bases found. However the effects did ripple through the US, fourstudents being killed by Ohio National Guardsmen duringantiwar protests at Kent State University(Williams and others227). The American effort collapsed in Indochina in April1975, when on April 12, Ambassador John Bunther and the USembassy staff evacuated by helicopter to a navy ship(Carvin2). Due to the final surrender, the Khmer Rouge forcedmarched into Phnom Penh on April 17th. The residents atfirst celebrating because the seige was over, however thathappiness turning to horror as the Khmer Rouge began to implement their barbarous plan for a utopian communistsociety (Carvin 2). Afterwards, Henry Kissinger and new president, GeraldFord asked that there be no recriminations (Shawcross 393). According to Shaw, maybe because of the US s drain of energy,thier please was listened to. A great debate never takingplace(393). Nixon and his associates claimed that the invasion ofCambodia was a great success, however it has been proveninaccurate. The invasion was not only disastrous forCambodia, but had serious long-term effects on Vietnamizationand on the nature of the Nixon administration itself. Numerous lives being taken in the pointless conflict,including the lives of college students here in the US. Nixon ignored vital intelligence and disregarded politicalrealities in order to carry out a half-baked dream ofheroism, trying to save South Vietnam from Communism. Bibliography Carvin, Andy. The End of Cambodia; The Beginning of a Nightmare . http://k12.bilkent.edu.tr/edweb.gsn.org/ sideshow/history/end.html, 1999. Carvin, Andy. Nixon s War: The American Bombing Begins . http://k12.bilkent.edu.tr/edweb.gsn.org/sideshow/history /nixon.html, 1999. Crowley, Monica. Nixon Off the Record. New York: Random House, 1996. Shawcross, William. Sideshow: KIssinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. Williams, William, and others. America In Vietnam. New York: Anchor Books, 1985.