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TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I am returning today without my approval H.R. 7447, the Second Supplemental Appropriation Act of 1973.

I am doing so because of my grave concern that the enactment into law of the "Cambodia rider" to this bill would cripple or destroy the chances for an effective negotiated settlement in Cambodia and the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops, as required by Article 20 of the January 27 Vietnam agreement.

After more than ten arduous years of suffering and sacrifice in Indochina, an equitable framework for peace was finally agreed to in Paris last January. We are now involved in concluding the last element of that settlement, a Cambodian settlement. It would be nothing short of tragic if this great accomplishment, bought with the blood of so many Asians and Americans, were to be undone now by Congressional action.

The decision to veto is never easy, but in this case there is no other responsible course open to me. To understand this decision, we should all recognize what the full impact would be if we call a total halt to U.S. air operations in Cambodia, as now sought by the Congress:

-- A total halt would virtually remove Communist incentive to negotiate and would thus seriously undercut ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Cambodia. It would effectively reverse the momentum towards lasting peace in Indochina set in motion last January and renewed in the four-party communique signed in Paris on June 13.

-- The proposed halt would also gravely jeopardize the ability of the Cambodian armed forces to prevent a Communist military victory achieved with the assistance of outside forces and the installation of a Hanoi-controlled government in Phnom Penh.

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-- A Communist victory in Cambodia, in turn, would threaten the fragile balance of negotiated agreements, political alignments and military capabilities upon which the overall peace in Southeast Asia depends and on which my assessment of the acceptability of the Vietnam agreements was based.

-- Finally, and with even more serious global implications, the legislatively imposed acceptance of the United States to Communist violations of the Paris agreements and the conquest of Cambodia by Communist forces would call into question our national commitment not only to the Vietnam settlement but to many other settlements or agreements we have reached or seek to reach with other nations. A serious blow to America's international credibility would have been struck -- a blow that would be felt far beyond Indochina.

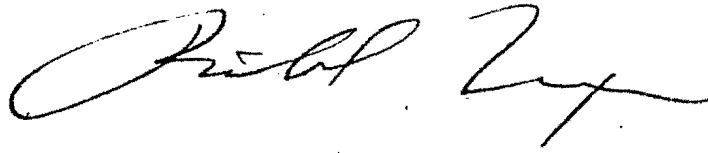
I cannot permit the initiation of a process which could demolish so substantially the progress which has been made, and the future relationships of the United States with other nations.

However, I must emphasize that the provisions of H.R. 7447, other than the "Cambodia rider," contain a number of appropriations that are essential to the continuity of governmental operations. It is critical that these appropriations be enacted immediately.

By June 28, nine Government agencies will have exhausted their authority to pay the salaries and expenses of their employees. The disruptions that would be caused by a break in the continuity of government are serious and must be prevented. For example, it will be impossible to meet the payroll of the employees at the Social Security Administration, which will threaten to disrupt the flow of benefits to 25 million persons.

But an even greater disservice to the American people -- and to all other peace loving people -- would be the enactment of a measure which would seriously undermine the

chances for a lasting peace in Indochina and jeopardize our efforts to create a stable, enduring structure of peace around the world. It is to prevent such a destructive development that I am returning H. R. 7447 without my approval.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Nixon", is written in dark ink on the right side of the page.

THE WHITE HOUSE,

June 27, 1973.