In Sideshow, journalist Shawcross presents the first full-scale investigation of the secret and illegal war the United States fought with Cambodia from 1969 to 1973, paving the way for the Khmer Rouge massacres of the mid-70s.

My Personal Review:
On Junior Day, 2006, I would recommend SIDESHOW by William Shawcross. It contains information about the twentieth century that could be applied to situations that America faces in the world in 2006. The global superpower naturally thinks that everything will be resolved by the application of hyperpower, as Japan suffered a humiliating defeat at the end of World War II when it discovered that the United States was not just fighting a war against Japan, it would nuke their cities to bring about whatever result it wanted. When American troops openly invaded parts of Cambodia, Congress responded by imposing limits which were still in place on April 30, 1973:

"The justification for bombing Cambodia had been to protect Americans in Vietnam. Since October 1970 the Congress had included in every military appropriation bill a proviso expressly forbidding bombing in Cambodia except for that purpose. By the end of March 1973 there were no American troops left in Indochina. Still the bombing of Cambodia increased. The administration now based its case on Article 20 of the Paris Agreement. Rogers now claimed that American withdrawal from Vietnam did not affect the situation in Cambodia, and that Article 20 legalized the bombing `until such time as a ceasefire could be brought into effect.' " (p. 277).

One of the strange things about the invasion of Cambodia was that Nixon made an announcement on April 30, 1970 which attempted to keep all previous secret activities secret:

Ignoring Menu, Nixon began with the lie that the United States had "scrupulously respected" Cambodia's neutrality for the last five years and had not "moved against" the sanctuaries. This falsehood was repeated by Kissinger in his background briefings to the press. That same evening he told reporters that the Communists had been using Cambodia for five years but, "As long as Sihanouk was in power in Cambodia we had to weigh the benefits in long-range historical terms of Cambodian neutrality as against any temporary military advantages and we made no efforts..."
during the first fifteen months of this administration to move against the sanctuary." The next day he said of Sihanouk's rule, "We had no incentive to change it. We made no effort to change it. We were surprised by the development. One reason why we showed such great restraint against the base areas was in order not to change this situation." (p. 146).

In his announcement of the invasion, Nixon stated that his action was taken "not for the purpose of expanding the war into Cambodia, but for the purpose of ending the war in Vietnam"; he would give aid to Cambodia, but only to enable it "to defend its neutrality and not for the purpose of making it an active belligerent on one side or the other." (p. 146).

Currently Iran has a militia of five million, and if Iran were to officially enter a war in Iraq as a result of bombings by Israel, as urged by Vice President Cheney, to remove Iran's nuclear capabilities, even if a bomb based on plans provided by the CIA wouldn't work, Iran has other ways it could strike back. Being subatomic is very much like Cambodia was in 1970, but we shall soon see what issues are about to be submitted to the UN security council, and if it helps or hurts. A blockade created by Iran so American supplies might have more trouble reaching Kuwait and Iraq; oil exports from the region could end; American dollars could fall; the interest on bonds could rise so high that the U.S. government couldn't balance a budget; and some of the world's banks might then be alarmed.

SIDESHOW by William Shawcross is the only book I have in which I can look up Lon Nil in the index. Lon Nil might well be Cambodia's forgotten man. His brother, Lon Nol, declared himself Chief of State as well as Prime Minister and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces when he dissolved the Assembly in October 1971 and assumed emergency rule. (p. 229). In December 1971, an American psychiatrist in the U.S. Army found "his close associates indicate his mental faculties have deteriorated markedly as a result of his February 1971 stroke" (p. 208). On April 1, 1975, at the urging of his brother Lon Non, Lon Nol took half a million dollars and moved to Hawaii. (pp. 357-358). But for me, the best picture of events in Cambodia is the final page of Chapter 8, The Coup, in March 1970, when Lon Nol overthrew Sihanouk, using the hostility of the urban elite and military officers to Sihanouk to justify a power grab by a former Minister of Defense who "had been the principal scourge of the Vietnamese Communists while privately profiting from the thriving covert business that they brought through Sihanoukville." (p. 113). Sihanouk responded by forming a government recognized by Peking on May 5, 1970, shortly after the American invasion announced by Nixon. Sihanouk had flown from Moscow to China on March 18, 1970, but Lon Nil was still in Cambodia:

Rioting broke out in several provinces; opposition was strongest in the market town of Kompong Cham, Cambodia’s second city, fifty miles northeast of Phnom Penh. After Sihanouk's radio broadcast, the town filled with peasants, fishermen and rice farmers from the neighborhood. The townspeople refused the government's orders to remove the Prince's
portrait, and they burned down the house of the new governor whom Lon Nol had appointed. Demonstrators gathered in buses and trucks to march on Phnom Penh. They were halted by an army roadblock, and after that . . . About ninety people were killed or wounded. (pp. 126-127).

The most vivid display of anger against Lon Nol occurred, again in Kompong Cham, when peasants seized his brother Lon Nil, killed him and tore his liver from his stomach. The trophy was taken into a Chinese restaurant, where the owner was ordered to cook and slice it. Morsels were handed to everyone in the streets around. (p. 127).

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