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## Armchair reporters cover Vietnam-Cambodia conflict

United Press International  
BANGKOK, Thailand — War correspondents — a loose phrase anyway — now cover the war in Indochina in air-conditioned comfort. Helped and hindered by dip-

lomats, intelligence agents, technicians, linguists and assorted other "reliable sources," they can't go to war to see for themselves what's happening.

Few correspondents want to cover a war by listening to a radio, but the clutch of Bangkok-based reporters who file on events in Indochina don't have a choice.

This is why Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia has been one of the most poorly reported battlefield efforts since Richard Harding Davis told his readers the generals had lied about the charge of the Light Brigade.

A relatively small — perhaps 100 people — but highly disparate group of journalists, military officers and diplomats listen, study, watch, talk and finally make up their minds what is going on at any given time.

Unfortunately, not many know the facts for sure and there have been glaring examples of this.

Some newsmen reported on Jan. 16 counterattacking Khmer Rouge had thrown Vietnamese forces out of Cambodia's only port of Kompong Som. Others, with much of the same evidence at hand, came to the opposite conclusion.

A similar — but more outrageous

— situation arose last summer as a news agency and the America network reported 80,000-man Vietnamese was underway in Cambodia.

Other reporters never told the story, and eventually proven right. The point was, ever, that all correspondents roughly the same information and interpreted it differently.

Information from Indochina comes primarily from official agencies and radio stations, parties involved, plus their allies, China and the Soviet Union.

So the armchair war correspondents, unable to visit, spend hours going through and transcripts of broadcasts from the Vietnam News Agency, Democratic Kampuchea Agency, Saporamen Kampuchea Voice of Vietnam, Voice of Democratic Kampuchea and Voice of Cambodia People.

The daily trick for a reporter find who has the latest information — and pray the basic reports correctly interpreted, so he doesn't look a complete fool a few days

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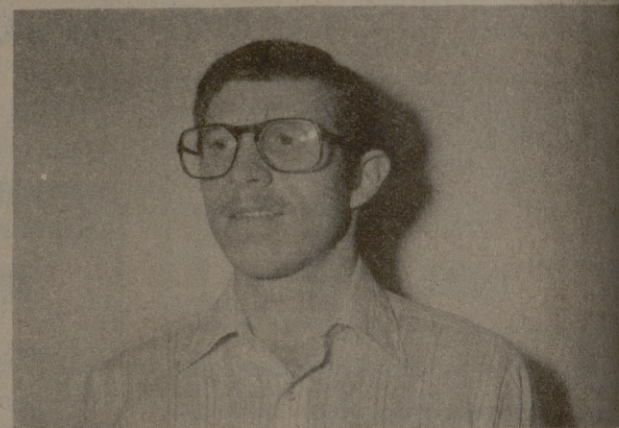
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