

GAO Report

Role of U.S. Team In Cambodia Rapped

United Press International

A 73-man U.S. military team in Cambodia is actually functioning as an advisory group in apparent violation of a 1971 congressional ban, the General Accounting Office charged yesterday.

The GAO, in a 92-page report on U.S. operations in Cambodia, also said there has been a considerable number of questionable financial transactions by both U.S. and Cambodian officials in the three years since American aid to the Phnom Penh government resumed.

It charged, too, that State and Defense department officials and U.S. military officers including Adm. John S. McCain Jr., the former Pacific commander, tried to hinder its investigation and blocked access to some vital information.

The report cited congressional bans on sending either combat troops or U.S. military advisers to Cambodia, and said that while Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird claimed in 1971 the government was abiding by the rules, in fact it was not doing so.

"As the Cambodia staff increased it assumed additional duties and became more involved with the Cambodian military. Except for not assigning advisers to specific field units, MEDT operated much the same as a military assistance advisory group," the report said. MEDT stands

for military equipment delivery team.

The GAO said the team, which is supposed to oversee the arrival and allocation of supplies, helps the Cambodians draw up military plans, operate their headquarters, run the supply system and perform other military functions.

In addition, it said, the Defense Department sent in at least 61 special teams on temporary assignments in Cambodia.

The special committee dia that were "almost totally unrelated to equipment delivery."

The report made no mention of the role of U.S. military men in running the bombing program in Cambodia halted on Aug. 15 by congressional action. It did report that the military spent over \$600,000 to set up communications for it and then concealed the money.

Among other irregular transactions it listed were:

- Concealment of costs for 300 GIs who trained Cambodian soldiers in Vietnam and for "excess" equipment turned over to Cambodia.
- Continued existence of large numbers of phantom soldiers on Cambodian military payrolls.
- Diversion of weapons by Gen. Lon Nol, brother of chief of state Lon Nol, from a legitimate military unit to his personal bodyguard.
- Aid requests for funds far in excess of what it knew Cambodia could absorb.