

July 1, 1971

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directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly participated in the overthrow of Sihanouk."

The Lon Nol government "was informed" of the American-South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia "and had no objection." Laird avoided using the word consulted, although that was how the question was framed. "There were certain advantages in not getting his tied up in a formal request," Laird said.

- The ceiling on the number of American troops to be used in the Cambodia operations was 20,000, a figure now on the way down, but South Vietnamese troops might hit the sanctuaries again on their own.

He would not rule out another South Vietnamese attack, "if facilities should be reconstructed" in Cambodia. He said it would be "five to six months at the earliest" before enemy troops could

reuse the base camps hit in the current drive. By that time, Laird said, the South Vietnamese army would not need American help in any new invasion of the sanctuaries.

- The United States might bomb Cambodia heavily after American troops leave the sanctuaries.

Asked by Senator Howard Cannon (Dem-Nev.) whether he foresaw the need to interdict the enemy supply line in Cambodia by bombing, Laird replied: "I would not rule out the requirement in order to protect our operations." The U.S. long has bombed supply lines in Laos intensively.

Laird said the South Vietnamese realize their "primary responsibility" is to move forward in Vietnam — not spread themselves too thin by getting bogged down in Cambodia.

He said he "would not support any program that interfered with Vietnamization"

A Deadline for Viet Takeover Of Ground War

Times-Post Service

Washington

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird promised yesterday that the South Vietnamese will be doing all the front-line fighting in the Vietnam war by July 1, 1971.

He said American troops by then will be limited to protecting their own bases.

Laird set that deadline at a Senate Armed Services

Committee hearing which also brought the pledge that there would be an arms control agreement with the Russians if Congress went along with President Nixon on anti-ballistic and multiple-warhead missile systems.

The defense secretary made these other points during a three-hour meeting called to discuss strategic weaponry but dominated by senatorial concerns about American involvement in Cambodia:

- "Several thousand" American troops already have been withdrawn from Cambodia and there will be further withdrawals by the end of this week . . . All Americans will be withdrawn by the end of June."

- Any American serviceman who sailed farther up the Mekong river than 21 miles violated his military orders.

"This is not a military operation," Laird said of the 47 South Vietnamese naval vessels which tied up at the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh on Monday. The purpose is to remove South Vietnamese refugees.

"I have no reports that any American military personnel went up to Phnom Penh. It would be a violation of their orders . . . No advisers are involved in this mission."

- The South Vietnamese may sail up the Mekong again because of the large number of refugees involved. He said "10,000 refugees are expected to be evacuated" in this naval operation which has "the complete permission on the Lon Nol government."

- The United States was "not involved in any way with the change of government in Cambodia." Laird's statement came in response to a question by Senator Daniel K. Inouye (Dem-Hawaii) on whether the United States

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and could influence ARVN future operations "to a very marked degree."

INFORMATION

Laird said "there was information developing that enemy activity would be stepped up" from out of the Cambodian sanctuaries into the Delta of South Vietnam — information which figured in President Nixon's decision to attack the sanctuaries. He was vague on who supplied such information and when.

The "over-all strategic success or failure" of the Cambodian raids will be judged by the U.S. position in August and September," he said.

The operations against Cambodian sanctuaries, Laird said, were designed to "make possible other withdrawals" of American troops; "make certain the Vietnamization program" went forward on schedule, and, most important of all, reduce American casualties.

By Laird's standard, an increase in American casualties this fall in the Delta would mean the Cambodian campaign failed.

CASUALTIES

"The important thing," Laird said in telling of the President's decision to invade Cambodia, "was the information that during the next few months the North Vietnamese would be using the sanctuaries at an increasing rate against Americans to increase American casualties" in South Vietnam. The enemy figured such higher casualties "could have an effect on public opinion in the United States," Laird said.

So far, Laird said, the results of the Cambodian raids have "exceeded our expectations" as far as the destruction of enemy supplies and facilities. He seemed to be back away from President Nixon's stated objective of finding and destroying the

enemy's command center in Cambodia.

Turning to strategic nuclear weaponry toward the end of the hearing, Laird linked success at the arms talks in Vienna with approval of the ABM (anti-ballistic-missile) and MIRV (multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle) by Congress.

"I certainly join" President Nixon in his pledge to achieve an agreement at the strategic arms limitation talks in Vienna, Laird said, "providing we carry out the program set forth by the President regarding ABM and MIRV."

President Nixon is asking Congress to approve an expansion of the Safeguard ABM system to protect a third Minuteman base and start work at other sites. The MIRV is the multiple warhead to go atop the Minuteman 3 missile in June and the Posiedon next January.