

## Big Saigon Sweep Into Cambodia

U.S. SUPPORTING OFFENSIVE WITH ADVISERS, FIREPOWER

# Massive Drive on Red Bases

New York Times

Saigon

South Vietnamese forces, supported by United States planes and artillery and accompanied by U.S. advisers, crossed the border into Cambodia yesterday. It was a massive operation against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sanctuaries inside Cambodia.

The operation, which involves thousands of troops backed up by armor and heavy artillery, was announced last night by the South Vietnamese Ministry of Defense.

## 'NECESSARY'

The U.S. participation was confirmed by the Department of Defense in Washington, which asserted that the action was a "necessary and effective measure to save American and free world lives."

The Defense Department said the American assistance is in the form of "advisers, tactical air strikes, medical evaluation and some logistics assistance."

A brief statement by the U.S. Military Command elaborated slightly, saying Americans are also providing helicopters and artillery.

It was the first time that either the South Vietnamese or American military commands had admitted operating across the Cambodian border, although at least six sweeps have been carried out since the overthrow of Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk six weeks ago.

The current operation ap-

pears to be much the largest, however, and it is also the first in which American support has been provided openly. South Vietnamese sources

See Back Page

## From Page 1

said several regiments of South Vietnamese troops are involved along with armored cavalry units and several battalions of Rnagers.

The sources said the force crossed into Cambodia from

Tay Ninh province and had reached the district town of Bavet by yesterday afternoon. THERE WAS NO IMMEDIATE REPORT OF CASUALTIES OR COMBAT BEEN Made with enemy units. THE AREA AROUND Bavet is known to be a Viet

Cong and North Vietnamese stronghold.

The operation is expected to last the better part of a week and reliable American sources said last night that the South Vietnamese commanders hoped to sweep the length of the Parrot's Beak—the long, narrow extension of Cambodia that juts 30 miles into South Vietnam.

## SPECULATION

There has been speculation in Saigon during the last few weeks that the South Vietnamese would attempt to seize control of the Parrot's Beak to deny the area to the enemy. However, the statement issued by the South Vietnamese Ministry of Defense said the units involved in the current operation had been ordered to return to South Vietnam as soon as the sweep was completed.

Although U.S. military spokesmen declined to give any details of the American assistance, sources said that U.S. advisers had gone in with the South Vietnamese.

"The lid is finally off," one U.S. officer said with obvious satisfaction. "The advisers will be doing everything on this operation that they normally do on an operation inside South Vietnam."

## COMBAT

This means that Ameri-

cans will staff the forward command posts of the units involved in the operation and accompany the South Vietnamese troops into combat, probably down to the battalion level.

The senior American advisers will fly in command helicopters, assisting their South Vietnamese counterparts in mapping strategy and relaying requests for air and artillery bombardments.

The advisers on the ground customarily carry weapons, but their principal mission is to assist the infantry commanders and provide an English-speaking liaison with the command post.

## COPTERS

Judging from the statements released last night, Americans will also be ferrying troops in helicopters during the current operation, as well as flying the medical evacuation helicopters and provide forward aerial reconnaissance for artillery and air bombardments.

Americans will also be engaged in getting the supplies to Vietnamese units, probably by road and helicopter.

Since the operation is a large one, it may well involve more than 100 Americans.

Many senior South Vietnamese military officers have been urging a large-scale operation into the Parrot's Beak for the last several weeks.

## RESTRAINT

The U.S. Embassy here reportedly at first urged restraint on the South Vietnamese, arguing that the diplomatic complications would outweigh the short-range military gains.

Despite this argument, the South Vietnamese began limited operations across the border on their own.

In these operations, however, American advisers attached to the units kept mostly to the South Vietnamese side of the border.

The South Vietnamese avoided the diplomatic complications by simply denying that their troops had ever crossed into Cambodia, despite repeated eyewitness

press reports of the operations.

## DISCUSSION

The plans for the current operation reportedly were discussed by South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker at a series of meetings at the presidential palace.

Although the actual fighting inside Cambodia will be done by South Vietnamese, the American PARTICIPATION IN THE OPERATION IS THOUGHT BY OBSERVERS HERE TO BE SUFFICIENTLY GREAT AS TO COMMIT THE United States to extensive military support of the new Cambodian regime.

"In essence," a Western diplomat said, "the U.S. has decided to widen the war by proxy. The South Vietnamese may do the fighting, but everyone knows who will be providing the weapons and the ammunition."