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Additional Allied Thrusts In Cambodia Are Expected

Third Foray Seen as Prelude to Opening of at Least 2 More Fronts—Only Light Contact With Communists Reported

By **TERENCE SMITH** **MAY 6 1970**
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, May 5 — A combined force of several thousand United States and South Vietnamese troops began a sweep of the northeastern corner of Cambodia early today and reportedly encountered only light and scattered contact with Communist soldiers by nightfall.

The allied units, which were airlifted across the border, were thrust into what was suspected to be an enemy base area in the rolling jungle covered hills of Ratanakiri Province, about 50 miles south of the Laotian border.

The new operation, the third major allied incursion into Cambodia in six days, seemed to indicate a decision to open fronts up and down the na-

tion's 600-mile border. The aim would be to halt supplies flowing to North Vietnamese troops operating inside South Vietnam.

Reliable military sources here said that final plans were being completed for at least two other allied assaults into enemy hideouts elsewhere along the border. Intelligence analysts believe that there are six such major areas between the Gulf of Siam and the intersection of the Cambodian, Laotian and South Vietnamese borders.

The new operation immediately raised the question of whether allied troops would attack the enemy's extensive supply facilities in eastern Laos. Route 166, an all-weather highway, which has served for

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years as a major Communist supply route, links the new target area to the Laotian border.

One officer estimated that allied troops could reach the border by Thursday if they wanted to. A South Vietnamese Army spokesman told a group of reporters at the operation headquarters in Pleiku tonight that as of now. The task force had orders not cross into Laos. He declined to say whether those

orders might be changed later.

Meanwhile, some 200 miles to the south, allied troops continued their sweeps of the enemy base camps in the Parrot's Beak and Fishhook sections of Cambodia. Enemy casualties in the two operations now total nearly 2,000, according to the reports of the United States military command.

At least 14 Americans have been killed in the two sweeps and 54 wounded. More than 100 South Vietnamese soldiers have

been killed and more than 400 wounded since the first units crossed into the Parrot's Beak last Wednesday.

The allied casualties are considered remarkably low for operations that together involve nearly 20,000 men supported by vast amounts of aircraft, armor and artillery. The great majority of the reported enemy casualties have been killed by air strikes and many American officers think the official total as reported by the United

States command is unrealistically high.

The 10,000-man task force operating in the Fishhook area continued to uncover substantial caches of enemy ammunition, weapons. Food and medical supplies.

Elements of the United States 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment riding in tanks and armored personnel carriers pushed north to Snoul, a rubber-plantation town about 20 miles from the tip of the Fishhook, where they first crossed the border on Friday.

Area Extended Significantly

The tank units thereby extended the area of the operation significantly. Allied troops now occupy all the territory of the Fishhook area south and west of a line between Snoul and the district town of Memot. They have cut Route 7, the main highway, in at least five places.

The target of the new operation is described as a Communist supply center and headquarters for the North Vietnamese troops operating in southern I Corps and northern II Corps tactical zones. Military sources said it served as the base area for the three North Vietnamese regiments that have laid siege in the past to the Special Forces camps at Benhet, Dakto and Dakseang, about 70 miles to the north, and Buprang and Duclap, about 75 miles to the south.

In all, about 6,000 enemy troops are thought to be operating outside the sanctuary, which is tucked inside a sharp bend in the Se San River. The river has long been used as a conduit for enemy supplies coming down from the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos.

Military sources said that waves of B-52 bombers had pounded the area or the new attack with hundreds of tons of explosives in the early morning.

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