

# Laird's War Admission

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of U. S. weapons had been made to the Cambodian government of Premier Lon Nol. Previously, the U. S. approved dispatch of 4000 captured Communist-made AK-47 rifles, standard arm for most of the Cambodian army as a result of Sihanouk agreements with Communist China.

The new shipments, according to the State Department, are of World War II-vintage M-1 rifles and carbines from storehouses in South Vietnam.

South Vietnamese regional and popular militia formerly were armed with those weapons before a large-scale U. S. move to re-equip them with the newer M-16 rifles used by American troops.

At his news conference, Laird also told why the Pentagon had failed to report at first a fourth U. S. air attack against North Vietnam which came to light the day after three other attacks were announced.

The fourth attack, he said, was against Mu Gia pass, by Navy planes. These planes reported through different channels than the Air Force, which undertook the other three.

But that attack, like the other three, was authorized by him, Laird said.

The other attacks, each involving from 50 to 120 planes, hit Barthelemy Pass, Kan Karai Pass and an unspecified logistics and supply area, all located, like Mu Gia Pass, on the North Vietnam-Laos border.

Laird repeatedly was asked about the U.S. drives into the sanctuary areas and why the operation had been ordered only now, amid U.S. troop withdrawals, instead of several years ago.

"There have been international policy considerations that have been involved," he said at one point. "The political situation changed and this opportunity was presented."

Later, he replied to questions on the point again:

"We did not ever have the political opportunity that we have now."

But Laird made it clear that he defends the U.S. moves primarily on grounds that destruction of the base areas is essential to insure that 150,000 U.S. troops can be withdrawn over the next year while the "Vietnamization" program to train Vietnamese troops to take over the fighting proceeds.

## POSITION

That was the position set forth by President Nixon last Thursday and by Laird on Saturday. Concern over presence of the base areas and their potential threat to Allied forces had been expressed by General Creighton W. Abrams, U.S. commander in Vietnam, Laird said.

U.S. destruction of the facilities, Laird said, may mean the Communists will not be able to use them for six months or longer.

"This period of time," Laird said, "is the crunch period so far as our Vietnamization program is concerned."

Laird also denied reports that he opposed the Cambodian decisions in secret White House meetings at which the policy was planned.

## SUPPORT

"I want you to know,"

Laird said, "that I supported fully the operations to destroy the sanctuaries and I supported fully the decision to use American troops . . . to protect our Vietnamization program . . . and to protect our American soldiers."

Laird also revealed that he approved "massive" B-52 raids on the Fishhook sanctuary area "three or four days" before the operation began and even before the final decision had been made for U. S. troops to attack there.

Laird said this resulted from the fact that while Mr. Nixon had made no decision yet to put U. S. soldiers into Cambodia, Joint Chiefs of Staff planning for that possibility was under way and preparatory B-52 raids were ordered as a way "to save U. S. lives" if the decision were made to attack.

## INCURSIONS

He also said, as had been known, that "incursions" into the sanctuaries had been under way by South Vietnamese troops since early April — shortly after Sihanouk's government fell.

He also insisted that U. S. operations in Cambodia are temporary.

"I want to make one thing clear," he said. "We are not going to become bogged down in these sanctuaries."

Meanwhile, a miniature dispute arose over a statement by Senate minority leader Hugh Scott, who quoted Mr. Nixon as saying that Cambodian Premier Lon Nol had requested 400,000 American troops to protect his government but scaled the request down to 200,000.

The White House and State Department, however, said the request was for arms to equip that number of Cambodian soldiers, not for U. S. troops. The Cambodian army now numbers about 35,000 men.

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## Laird Says Sihanouk's Ouster Sparked Attack

Times-Post Service

### Washington

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird told a press conference yesterday that Cambodia's "changed political situation" presented an opportunity that was a key factor in the United States decision to attack Communist sanctuaries in that country.

It was the first time a top Administration official had conceded publicly that the overthrow of Prince Noro-

dom Sihanouk in March triggered the U.S. action against the base areas which have existed for years.

President Nixon did not cite the downfall of Sihanouk when he gave the reasons for the move into Cambodia in an address to the nation last week.

Meanwhile, a State Department spokesman disclosed that the first shipment

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