

Laird Says Troops Will Quit Cambodia On Nixon Schedule

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DETROIT, May 11—Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird emphasized today that American troop withdrawals from Cambodia would follow President Nixon's schedule despite complaints from officers in the field that all occupied territory might not be searched in time.

"Every acre of real estate may not be searched in the time period allotted," Mr. Laird said at a news conference here, making clear that he felt this did not matter.

[In South Vietnam, President Nguyen Van Thieu was quoted by The Associated Press as having said Monday that Cambodia had set no time or geographic limits on the allied sweeps.]

In a televised news conference last Friday night, President Nixon said that the first American troops would

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begin leaving Cambodia this week, that most of the soldiers would be out by mid-June and that all, including advisers to the South Vietnamese Army, would be out by the end of June. Allied operations against enemy sanctuaries began April 30 and have involved more than 15,000 American soldiers in seven offensives ranging from the Mekong Delta to the Central highlands.

American battalion and company commanders have said that their men are so spread out in the offensives and in guarding captured supplies that they have been unable to search much of the occupied territory. According to news reports from South Vietnam, thousands more soldiers or several more weeks than Mr. Nixon has allowed would be needed just to destroy or remove the vast stores of supplies.

Here to address the Economic Club of Detroit, Secretary Laird said that the rainy season in Indochina would begin soon and that American troops had to leave before the monsoons. "American forces are not going to be bogged down in Cambodia," he added.

No Backdown by Laird

Mr. Laird was questioned often on the subject but did not back down. "The operation was to last from three to six weeks and the timetable will be met," he said.

While he said that the mission was to destroy enemy facilities, food supplies and weapons, he added that the success of the Cambodian operation should not be judged on the bunkers taken but on the continuation of troop withdrawals from South Vietnam, lower casualties and progress in turning the fighting over to the South Vietnamese.

The Secretary also made the following points:

¶There "will be further reductions as far as military expenditures go" in coming years and "the economy must be ready" for such lower military spending.

¶He has disallowed some commercial sales to the Soviet Union, including the sale of equipment to make truck parts, and he made it clear that he opposed a plan for the Ford Motor Company to help in building a truck plant in the Soviet Union.

¶Draft calls this year will be nearer 150,000 men than 175,000. He did not directly answer a question whether the Administration planned an all-volunteer force for service in South Vietnam in the future.