

U.S. Recruits Cambodians In Vietnam

Saigon

American soldiers are reported to be recruiting ethnic Cambodian residents of the Mekong delta for fighting in Cambodia.

Colonel Richard W. Ellison, senior American adviser in Vinh Binh province, said that Special Forces soldiers in the company of "a head of the Khmer Serai" — the Cambodian rightist movements — recruited and shipped out 230 Cambodian militiamen last week.

He said, however, that the drive in his province came to "a screeching halt" when the South Vietnamese province chief complained to President Nguyen Van Thieu that the recruiting had been going on without his knowledge.

Informed American officials confirmed the account and acknowledged that the drive is under way in other delta provinces with large Cambodian populations, but they declined to provide details.

The recruitment campaign appears to be an aspect of an effort reported earlier to sign up some of the 600,000 ethnic Cambodians in South Vietnam for military service in Cambodia, as the Cambodian government had requested of the South Vietnamese.

However, the indications then were that the Cambodians would be integrated into the Cambodian armed forces. The involvement of the Special forces leaves open the possibility that they could command the recruited Cambodian forces as they are commanding similar troops now in South Vietnam and Laos. *New York Times*