

Hint on Future Air War Policy

San Clemente

The White House hinted yesterday that the United States may not provide tactical air support to South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia after June 30, the deadline for the withdrawal of American troops.

At a briefing yesterday morning, press secretary Ronald Ziegler did not completely rule out bombing activity in Cambodia after June 30 but said:

"That does not suggest tactical air support of the ARVN (South Vietnamese forces) in Cambodia."

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Instead, he suggested, the determining factor in any future presidential decision to resume air operations in Cambodia will be "the security of United States forces in South Vietnam" rather than the requirements of South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia.

South Vietnamese officials have been saying in recent days that they full expect American tactical air support to continue.

Ziegler also announced that the President will present an interim report to the nation on the Cambodian situation at 6 p.m. (PDT) tomorrow.

Ziegler repeated the President's pledge to halt all American operations in Cambodia on June 30. Yesterday's discussion centered on what might happen after that date.

Ziegler's answers represented a slight variation on what he had been saying for several weeks. The burden of his answers until yesterday had been that he would not foreclose the use of American air power in Cambodia after June 30.

He did not foreclose such activity yesterday but suggested that it would be resumed only if President Nixon felt it was essential to the security of U.S. troops and not merely if the South Vietnamese requested it.

Ziegler's remarks came just before the President returned to Washington after a four-day rest that began late Thursday night.

New York Times