

VIPs Meet the GIs

-- A Muddy Dialogue

Associated Press

Shakey's Hill, Cambodia

A party of United States congressmen, governors and White House advisers stepped off helicopters here yesterday and slogged through red mud to find out how it is going for American troops in Cambodia.

Governor Raymond P. Shafer of Pennsylvania headed for three mud-caked soldiers and climbed atop their sandbagged bunker.

"What do you feel the attitude is of our men with reference to coming into Cambodia?" the tall Republican asked.

The young soldiers squirmed and glanced nervously at each other. One

with a mustache ventured to speak first.

"They feel like it might help end the war, so they came, you know."

"Well, I've been talking to men everywhere and I find they think it should have been done sooner," the governor said. "Is that your attitude too?"

Yes sir," said the first soldier. "That's what I think too."

"Do you all agree on that?" the governor said, turning to the others.

"That's right, sir. Yes sir," they nodded emphatically.

"That's good," said the governor. "I think Americans sometimes get a

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lina. White House communications director Herbert Klein and presidential counselor Bryce N. Harlow. The 13th member of the party, Senator Thomas J. McIntyre (Dem-N.H.), stayed in Saigon yesterday.

BELTS

In the briefing tent, the officials were given North Vietnamese pistol belts and were told how the hill got its name from Private First Class Chris (Shakey) Keffalos, 19, of Albuquerque, N.M., who was killed by an enemy machine gun May 22 on the final assault on the hill.

Later the group inspected a sampling of captured weapons and made their way over a slick jungle trail to one of the underground caverns.

Senator Cannon slipped and fell in the mud. Harlow got one leg down through the cavern's small opening but the other got stuck on top of the ground and he had to wrestle it into the hole.

FALL

Governor Shafer, a husky six-footer, got into the cavern all right. But when he tried to climb back up the bamboo ladder, he broke a rung and fell back down. He wasn't hurt.

Artillery on top of Shakey's Hill was booming at suspected enemy positions and just as half of the party returned from the cavern, two F-100 Super Sabre fighter-bombers flew low overhead, unloading bombs into the jungle.

"We never saw air strikes that close before," said one surprised soldier.

Before leaving Shakey's Hill for the return trip to Saigon, the officials shook hands and exchanged pleasantries with some of their constituents who had been lined up behind cardboard signs bearing the names of their states.

"You're doing a fine job," Representative Whitehurst told three Virginia men. "You should be commended

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distorted picture, and I'm here to find out the real

facts."

The governor strode off to join the other fact-finders in a briefing tent and the three

soldiers sprawled on the bunker. The mustachioed one exhaled a deep breath.

"Jeez," he said, "I hope

none of the guys heard us."

For the dignitaries, it was their first look at U.S. troops in the field since they arrived Thursday night for a four-day inspection of the Indochina theater at President Nixon's request.

But for the troops it was another day of standing tall for another group of VIPs come to inspect Shakey's Hill, 107 miles north of Saigon and four miles inside Cambodia, where tremendous amounts of enemy war materials have been unearthed from cavernous storerooms dug into the jungled slopes.

This time an extra effort was made to make the camp, turned into a quagmire by monsoon rains, look presentable, and the soldiers had to put on their shirts and some were given new hats.

CLEANUP

"We've been breaking our backs making things look good, picking up sticks, putting leaves in tents so they don't muddy their boot — stuff like that," one trooper said.

"We don't seem to be getting much done," another added. "We should be fighting or getting these caches out of here, not sitting in a hole making like a showcase."

Besides Governor Shafer, those in the party were Senators George Murphy (Rep-Calif.); John Tower (Rep-Texas) and Howard Cannon (Dem-Nev.); Representatives Melvin Price (Dem-Ill.); William G. Bray (Rep-Ind.); G. William Whitehurst (Rep-Va.) and O.C. Fisher (Dem-Tex.); Governors John A. Love of Colorado and Robert E. McNair of South Caro-



AP Wirephoto

NEVADA'S SENATOR CANNON WAS HELPED FROM A BUNKER
Earlier, he fell into the red mud of Shakey's Hill

for it. You're brave men."

After talking to a Nevada youth, Senator Cannon told a newsman, "It's a nasty mess anyway you look at it, but I'm glad to see they got a lot of these weapons the enemy won't be able to use against our boys."

And Governor Shafer, who talked to dozens of soldiers, said he "didn't find anybody who thought we did the wrong thing by coming into Cambodia."