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# Laotians Reported Joining the Enemy in

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Special to The New York Times

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, June 10—The Government here reported today that Laotians had joined the North Vietnamese and Vietcong military forces that were fighting in the Siemreap area in northwest Cambodia.

A spokesman said, however, that he did not know whether the Laotians were villagers pressed into service by the Vietnamese or whether they were members of the Communist-led Pathet Lao. Nor did he know whether the Laotians were serving as soldiers or doing other jobs, such as carrying food supplies, arms and ammunition.

High military sources interpreted the infusion of men from Cambodia's northern neighbor as another piece of evidence that the Vietnamese Communists had turned their campaign in Indochina into one single theater of war instead of three separate fronts in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The information about the Laotians in the Siemreap area was reported at the regular morning briefing here by the Government's military spokesman, Maj. Am Rong.

## Says Town Is Being Held

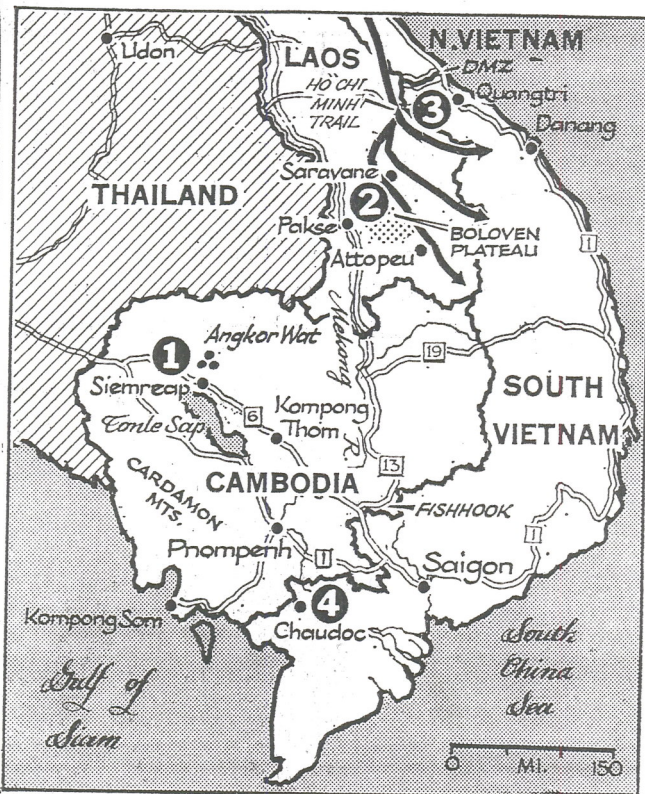
The major said the Communist force was continuing to harass the area around Siemreap, famed for the striking 12th-century temples of Angkor Wat. But he said that the town itself and the airstrip were held by the Government.

The Communists seized the airstrip and attacked parts of the town Saturday. The Government garrison there, with the help of reinforcements, regained control on Monday. [Supplies and ammunition were flown into the airport Wednesday, Reuters reported.]

Major Am Rong said 40 enemy soldiers and 20 on the Government side had been killed so far in the fighting at Siemreap.

He said no Laotians had been taken prisoner and he had no precise information on how many were there.

But whatever the number and whatever the job the Laotians are doing, according to informed military sources here, the development means that the Vietnamese Communists, operating far from their old supply and reinforcement lines and on a much wider front than ever



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Laotians were reported to have joined Communist units in Siemreap area (1). In Laos, a Government commander in Pakse (2) was said to be pondering whether to try to retake nearby Saravane. In South Vietnam, B-52's struck at Communist posts near Quangtri (3) and Chaudoc (4).

before, are quickly opening new avenues of recruitment.

There have always been Pathet Lao units, though not very active militarily, in the southernmost part of Laos, west of the Mekong River. This border area is only about 120 miles from Siemreap in northwest Cambodia, where the Laotians were reportedly seen.

It is also considered possible that the Laotians may have come from northeast Cambodia, where thousands of them have lived for generations and where Communist troops are now in almost complete control.

All of this, according to the military sources, seems to flow from the strategy adopted by the Communists after United States and South Vietnamese troops moved into Cambodia on May 1 to attack Communist sanctuaries.

In both Laos and Cambodia, the Communists have responded by fanning out, taking new territory and strengthening and widening alternate supply routes to replace the

ones lost in the allied attack.

They have moved onto the Boloven Plateau in southern Laos, a fertile breadbasket near the Kong River, a major route for sending supplies south into Cambodia. They have also captured the last obstruction on the river, the provincial capital of Attopeu.

Yesterday, after weeks of harassment, they seized Saravane, another provincial capital at the edge of the plateau and apparently part of the new supply-and-sanctuary grid.

In Cambodia, they have secured the upper Mekong, into which the Kong flows, making their river route into northeastern Cambodia complete. And now they are moving rapidly west in Cambodia—to the Siemreap area, to Tonle Sap, the Great Lake of Cambodia, and to the Cardamom Mountains.

South Vietnamese and American military officials contend that the Communists have been hurt badly by the allied invasion, that their supply lines are strained, that they have broken

up into small groups and are in disarray.

This assessment, according to knowledgeable sources here, is vastly exaggerated.

These sources agree that the Communists have suffered losses and are strained, but they point out that at the same time these troops continue to be able to strike Cambodian towns and villages at will, if not for the purpose of holding them, then at least for the psychological effect.

The key question, military experts say, is whether the Communists will be successful in recruiting among the Cambodians. It will obviously be more difficult than recruiting among their own people in South Vietnam, although there are an estimated half a million Vietnamese living in Cambodia.

## Border Action Is Light

SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 10 (Reuters)—Enemy ac-



THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1970

# Northwest Cambodia

Activity against American troops in Cambodia decreased yesterday with only light and scattered actions reported, the United States military command said today.

Forces in the Fishhook area of Cambodia reported a decline in enemy activity, a spokesman said.

Four more supply caches were found yesterday and the troops recovered more equipment from a dump found earlier, he said.

The new finds included 74 tons of rice, 5 tons of ammunition, more than 7 miles of time fuse and 100 cooking pots.

In northern South Vietnam, an Americal Division unit that lost two men killed and eight wounded in a battle yesterday morning, was shelled last night.

The spokesman said the troops, from the division's

196th Brigade, were hit by 30 mortar rounds after setting up camp about 500 yards from the battle scene.

Troops from the division's 198th Brigade were hit by rifle fire and hand grenades this morning a few miles away. One soldier was killed and eight were wounded, the spokesman said.

Six B-52 bombing missions were flown in South Vietnam—four in northern Quangtri Province and two in Chaudoc in the Mekong Delta.

Three aircraft were shot down yesterday—a jet fighter-bomber in Laos and two helicopters in South Vietnam, the command said.

An Air Force F-4 Phantom crashed in southern Laos, the area containing the Ho Chi Minh infiltration trail. One crewman is missing but the other was rescued.