

U.S. JETS BOMBING CAMBODIAN TRAILS ON DEEPER RAIDS

Aides Disclose New Supply
Routes Beyond 21.7-Mile
Limit Are Targets

JUNE 30 HALT IS UNSURE

Missions Began at the Time

Allied Forces Started
Ground Operations

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 21 — Reliable military sources disclosed today that United States fighter-bombers and gunships, which have been restricted to flying a maximum of 21.7 miles into Cambodia in support of ground operations, have been ranging much deeper into northeast Cambodia for nearly two months in raids on new enemy infiltration routes.

The raids began at the time of the United States and South Vietnamese ground assaults into enemy sanctuaries starting on April 30. Officials say the purpose of the raids is to make it difficult for North Vietnam to establish a new supply line deeper inside Cambodia as an alternate to the sanctuaries attacked along the South Vietnamese border.

American officials here say it is unclear whether these raids, never before discussed publicly, will cease on June 30, when all American military efforts in Cambodia are scheduled to end.

Limitations Explained

In official statements and in briefings of Congressional committees, the Administration has made it clear that the United States would not provide air combat support for South Vietnamese forces beyond the 21.7-mile limit set for American troops in Cambodia.

The Administration, however, has never excluded the possibility that American planes would bomb enemy supply lines and bases beyond that limit.

Under the proposed Cooper-Church amendment restricting future military operations in Cambodia, such air activities would be permissible. The amendment, now pending in the Senate, only bans air combat operations in support of Cambodian forces.

In an address on June 3, President Nixon spoke of only one possible exception to the cessation of American military

Continued on Page 6, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

activities in Cambodia after July 1. The only remaining military activity, he said, "will be air missions to interdict the movement of enemy troops and material where I find that is necessary to protect the lives and security of our men in South Vietnam."

But military commanders here as yet have been given no instructions on whether to continue or terminate raids on the supply lines.

To date, well-placed sources say, there has been relatively little infiltration along the new routes — which run from Attopeu in Laos by river down the Se Kong into the Mekong and thence eastward along Route 19 and other roads toward South Vietnam.

Supplies Floated

The North Vietnamese are known to have developed some ingenious techniques for moving certain necessities by water. In some instances rice and drugs are incased in plastic sacks with bamboo attachments to keep them from snagging along the river bank. These sacks are then scooped up some miles down river by troops with nets. Gasoline has been floated down in half-full 50-gallon drums, the air within increasing their buoyancy.

Many of the sacks and drums have been sunk by machine-gun fire, but a greater effort is concentrated on finding and attacking transshipment points.

American weapons experts have come up with one answer to the problem of halting the motorized sampans and barges that also are used in this traffic. Five-hundred-pound bombs with special magnetic fuses have been dropped into sections of rivers where the nearby population has been warned away. These bombs, which lodge in the mud, are triggered by the passage overhead of metallic objects as small as an outboard motor.

Various Precautions Taken

In an effort to spare both the local population and ancient shrines and relics in the region, a number of steps have been taken, the sources assert.

First, no firing or bombing is permitted without specific permission of the English-speaking Cambodian officers who accompany each mission in low-flying spotter planes.

Second, leaflets are dropped in villages to warn the people to stay off roads and waterways at night.

Third, aerial photos of scores of shrines have been distributed to all pilots engaged in these missions, with specific instructions not to fire or bomb in those areas, nor close to any villages.

Fourth, while pilots in Vietnam are permitted to shoot back if fired upon, those on the deep Cambodian strikes are instructed not to return fire from shrine areas, but instead to quickly fly out of range, officials said.

The aircraft used include F-4 fighter-bombers and specially adapted C-119 and C-130 gunships.