

Air Bombings

'Side Benefit for Cambodia'--Laird

Washington

American bombing raids in Cambodia after United States forces have been pulled out will have beneficial "side effects on the (Cambodian) troops on the ground," Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird said yesterday.

The Secretary added that "I would think there would be ancillary benefit" for Cambodian ground forces fighting the Communists in their own country.

Laird's remarks, made to newsmen as he returned to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., after three weeks in Europe, came a day after Secretary of State William P. Rogers' statement that use of American air power after the June 30 pullout of U.S. ground forces obviously "may have a dual benefit," aiding both "our purposes" and serving the Lon Nol regime.

Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim indicated American planes may bomb a long way from the South Vietnamese-Cambodian border.

Friedheim confirmed reports that some U.S. planes have struck targets along what he said was a potential enemy supply line some 30 miles northwest of Phnom Penh. These supply lines, he said, are subject to American air interdiction.

All these remarks have made it clear that American air activity after June 30 will be more wide-ranging than the Administration earlier had indicated.

Yesterday Laird said he did not believe "that it's good practice . . . to give flat answers on operational orders as far as the future is concerned."

The Administration has been trying to work out ways to help sustain the Lon Nol regime without becoming directly involved. One answer is the wide air activity, designated as interdiction to help protect U.S. forces in South Vietnam but also providing "ancillary" help to the Cambodian forces.

Another is military aid to Cambodia. Small arms, spare parts and radio equipment already are being sent. A Phnom Penh report yesterday said American Air Force personnel were seen installing electronic equipment for the Cambodians at the capital's airfield.

State department spokesman Carl Barch said the

United States is awaiting a Thai decision on whether they will send forces into Cambodia to aid Lon Nol "before we face the decision of what support" Washington can and will give.

One problem is legislative authority both to finance Thai forces in Cambodia and for military aid to Cambodia in the new fiscal year beginning July 1. Barch said at least a new congressional appropriation would be needed, and possibly new authorization.

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