

1700 Left in Cambodia

U.S. Troops Race To Meet Deadline

Bridges, Highways Destroyed

United Press

Saigon

American troops raced to meet their June 30 withdrawal deadline from Cambodia yesterday, leaving behind lingering tear gas, blown up bridges and damaged roads to hamper Communist reoccupation of border sanctuaries.

By last night, military sources said, only 1700 American GIs were left on Cambodian soil, down from a peak of 31,000.

Allied strategy in Cambodia began to resemble in many respects that in Laos, which the Communists have also used as a sanctuary and supply route to South Vietnam for a decade.

South Vietnamese military officials said yesterday they were evacuating the population from mountainous north-east Cambodia, which the Phnom Penh government decided to abandon. About 7500 refugees had been resettled in South Vietnam since last week, they said.

AREAS

Abandoning difficult areas to the Communists and widescale bombing raids are tactics the United States has long employed in Laos.

Such measures are necessary because even though the two-month American campaign in Cambodia had considerable military success, the delaying tactics employed by the withdrawing troops would not hinder the communists forever, military sources said.

The retreating U.S. units sowed long-lasting tear gas crystals in Cambodian bunkers and along jungle trails the Communists could use. They blew up bridges, cratered roads and felled trees to make truck travel difficult.

But the gas would last only about two weeks under pre-

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UPI Telephoto

Using his rifle as a flagpole, a U.S. soldier returned to Vietnam yesterday

U.S. Racing Deadline

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vailing monsoon conditions, and Communist engineer battalions soon would reopen the roads they said.

MOVE

With both the First Cavalry and 25th Infantry Divisions and their attached units on the move, it appeared that President Nixon's June 30 pullout deadline will be met with hours or even a day to spare.

It is a measured withdrawal. Some troopers are walking out, searching for ene-

my caches of weapons and supplies as they go. To the pleasant surprise of American commanders, the enemy has made little attempt to harass the U.S. rearguard.

We are utilizing every minute we have in Cambodia," an officer said.

All of the 25 temporary bases the cavalymen hastily erected during their two months in Cambodia have been dismantled and the troops evacuated, it was disclosed. At only one base did the enemy attack just as the last defenders were pulling

out. The Communist force was beaten back.

OUTFITS

Some outfits are being flown out to newly prepared bases within Vietnam. Some bases are located just a mile or two from the border. To many an American GI, as one said: "It is hard to know when we left Cambodia and got back into old Vietnam."

The three armored forces which entered Cambodia two months ago are generally returning over the same routes. But now instead of the roads being dusty, they

are muddy enough to cause trouble for some tracked vehicles.

For the monsoon season is at its worst, with fierce rains several times a day, and constantly low-hanging clouds to make flying difficult for helicopter pilots.

Two brigades of South Vietnamese airborne troops have been teamed with U.S. units in the Fishhook area from the start of Cambodia operations. There are indications that these paratroopers were withdrawing at the same time as U.S. troops.