

U.S. Jets Give Direct Support to Cambodian Troops

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OUTSIDE SKOUN, Cambodia, Aug. 5 (AP)—Seven American planes gave direct air support to Cambodian ground troops here today.

The controller on the ground was a Cambodian officer trained by the United States Special Forces whose radio technique and American slang were flawless.

After the air strikes, Cambodian troops recaptured part of the outskirts of Skoun, but heavy fighting still lay ahead. The town lies 40 miles northeast of Phnompenh.

Three battalions of Cambodian troops trying to drive through a large enemy force on the last four miles to the key road intersection of the district capital at Skoun were caught in firefight early today. They sent out urgent calls for air support.

U.S. Plane Arrives

The first to arrive were a United States OV-10 reconnaissance plane and a South Vietnamese transport bristling with heavy machine guns.

As the South Vietnamese plane pulled off target with its ammunition spent, the Cambodian officer said on the radio that more air strikes were needed to break down enemy strong points.

The American pilot in the O 10 Code named Rustic Zero Eight, said in a Midwestern accent: "If you can't get yours [Cambodian aircraft], we will call in our own."

Thirty minutes later, the first of five F-100's arrived and started a bombing pattern.

The Cambodian officer was asked if the strikes were in direct support of his troops or were bombing Communist supply lines leading to South Vietnam. In Washington, the White House insisted yesterday that United States bombers were flying only interdiction missions against enemy supply lines, although it was conceded that there might be tactical benefit for the Cambodians.

"This is direct support for my battalion," the Cambodian officer replied. "Watch."

250-Pound Bombs Dropped

On the first pass, the F-100 flew at tree-top level and roper "snake-eyes"—250-pound bombs with air brakes developed for Vietnam to permit attacking aircraft to get as low as possible before releasing, thus insuring maximum accuracy.

The spotter plane turned lazy circles and, based on information from the ground controller, fired white phosphorous marking rounds to guide the jets on later runs.

When the first two F-100s had dropped their last bombs, the other jets dove in for napalm passes and huge orange clouds turning dirty black sprang up a bare 900 feet down Route 6 from the Cambodian soldiers. This is about as close as air support can be and still remain safe.

Finally the jets, still roaring at tree-top level, fired 20-mm Gatling guns with high explosive incendiary shells into the enemy positions.

Another Plane on Way

"O.K., that's it, Hotel Eight. There will be another Rustic here in two zero minutes if you need more help," the OV-10 pilot said.

"Rustic Zero Eight, this is Hotel Eight," said the Cambodian ground controller over the radio. "Roger that and thanks."

The Cambodian officer got on another radio and in Cambodian ordered his troops to move-out, but carefully because of the large enemy concentration still thought to be in the area.

"We are lucky to have American air support," the officer said. "Cambodia does not have enough air support or enough artillery and we must have fire power."

The departing OV-10 pilot promised more would come if needed and as if to fulfill the pledge a new OV-10 took up station over the battalions shortly thereafter and called down:

"Hotel Eight. This is Rustic

coming on station. What's your situation?"

If more trouble developed, the new OV-10 would call in more jet air strikes, the Cambodian officer said.

During the earlier battle for Kompong Thom, heavy United States air strikes were credited with helping break a month-long siege. And during the latest fighting for that city, more strikes were being reported flown daily.

Mansfield Questions Move

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5 (AP)—Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader said today United States air support of Cambodian military operations could lead the United States into "a full-fledged war," and questioned whether President Nixon knew what was going on.

"It was my understanding, based on the President's declaration and promise, that this kind of support would be withdrawn completely after June 30," Mr. Mansfield told the Senate.

That was the deadline Mr. Nixon set for withdrawal of United States forces after their assault against Communist-held areas in Cambodia.

Mr. Mansfield said he understood from Mr. Nixon that there was to be no United States military involvement other than interdiction raids against Communist supply lines leading into South Vietnam.

"I am not aware if he is aware of what is going on in Cambodia at the present time,

the Senator said.

"If this continues, it appears to me that we will have a repetition of what happened in Vietnam," Mr. Mansfield said. "First air support, then advisers, then troops, then we'll have a full fledged war."