

TROOP CUT LINKED TO CAMBODIAN AID

Laird Says a Congressional
Refusal to Grant Funds
Could Slow Withdrawal

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By JOHN W. FINNEY

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 20 — Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird cautioned today that a Congressional refusal to provide \$155-million in military aid for Cambodia could slow American troop withdrawals from South Vietnam.

Mr. Laird described the Administration's aid program for Cambodia as a "good investment" for a reduction of American forces in southeast Asia. He told reporters Congressional action would have a "substantial effect" on the troop withdrawals.

The Administration request faces considerable opposition in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where some members have voiced concern that a large-scale aid program for Cambodia could lead to a deepening American involvement there.

Senator J. W. Fulbright, the chairman, announced today that two committee staff consultants — James G. Lowenstein and Richard M. Moose — were being sent to Cambodia so the committee could have a first-hand report before considering the Administration's request for more funds.

Senator Fulbright noted that Secretary of State William P. Rogers, in testifying before the committee on April 27, expressed concern that large-scale military assistance for Cambodia would probably be followed by the need for American military advisers and eventually for troops.

Through a transfer of funds,

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Laird Links Troop Withdrawal To Funds for Aid to Cambodia

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the Administration has already allocated \$100-million to help Cambodia increase her military forces. The Administration now is seeking \$155-million more in the current fiscal year—\$70-million for economic support and \$85-million for military assistance, which Administration officials have said would go largely for small arms and ammunition.

It was becoming apparent that the Administration was putting considerable emphasis on a link between Cambodian aid and troop withdrawals.

In submitting his request to Congress on Wednesday, President Nixon said that Cambodia's ability to defend herself was "a vital element in the success of Vietnamization."

Today Mr. Laird and Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Republican leader, made the linkage even more explicit.

Senator Scott told reporters that "the withdrawal of troops would be impeded" if the Cambodian aid program was rejected. "That is the truth and I will continue to hammer it to the ground," he said.

Asked for comment on the Scott statements, Mr. Laird said that if the Cambodian forces were unable to retain North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia,

then "the North Vietnamese forces will be back in South Vietnam facing South Vietnam and American forces there."

"This would cause us to take a look at our troop withdrawal program and would have a substantial effect on our programs," he said.

Mr. Laird delivered his warning following an appearance before the Senate Appropriations Committee to ask for restoration of various weapons programs that the House had cut out of the military budget.

As Mr. Laird was testifying, the Senate was considering a \$19-billion appropriation bill for the Department of Labor and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The bill was \$311-million more than requested by the Administration and \$246-million more than approved by the House. Most of the Senate increases are for health care and research programs — an area in which the Appropriations Committee found the Administration had made "crippling cuts."

In a Senate speech, Senator William Proxmire, Democrat of Wisconsin, protested against recent suggestions by Mr. Laird that the defense budget would have to be increased next year.

"Unless the world situation changes dramatically," the Senator said, "there will be no excuse for an increased military budget in the coming year."

Senator Proxmire estimated that \$13-billion to \$14-billion could be saved next year through continuing troop withdrawals from South Vietnam, a "modest withdrawal" of 25 percent of the troops in Europe and other manpower reductions of 500,000 men.