

# U.S. Acknowledges a Rise In Cambodian Air Actions

By HEDRICK SMITH JAN 20 1971

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 — The White House today acknowledged a recent step-up in the type and intensity of American air operations in Cambodia, but insisted that Administration policy had not changed from the guidelines laid down by President Nixon last summer.

Spokesmen were unable, however, to provide a precise explanation for a photograph showing an American in camouflage uniform racing to a helicopter that had landed near Tanew, not far from heavy fighting along Route 4 in Cambodia. The Associated Press, which distributed the photograph, quoted sources identifying him as an American liaison officer, presumably coordinating logistical support for Cambodian forces.

Newsmen were told by a White House spokesman that President Nixon's prohibitions against American ground combat personnel or advisers for Cambodian forces were still in force.

"There are no United States ground troops or advisers," Ronald L. Ziegler, White House press secretary, said.

## Suggests Embassy

Asked about the photograph, Jerry W. Freidheim, a Defense Department spokesman, suggested that the American in the photograph might be assigned to the American Embassy in Pnompenh, although the State Department took a contrary view.

"I suppose there are some people working for the Embassy around Pnompenh," Mr. Freidheim said in answer to a question. "I don't know where those people are. I have no idea who that individual was. You would have to address the Embassy."

At a later briefing by Robert J. McCloskey, the State Depart-

ment spokesman, the question of Embassy involvement came up. He said that, so far as he knew, embassy personnel were "not authorized" to leave Pnompenh and take part in operations by Cambodian and South Vietnamese forces. "To my knowledge," he asserted, "they do not."

Mr. McCloskey conceded that there had been an increase in the American mission in Pnompenh to 95—41 civilians and 54 military personnel. Of that number, he said, 22 are on temporary duty, ranging from one week to six months. Last month the embassy listed 77 on its roster, including temporary personnel. That represented an increase of about 20 since September, officials said.

Mr. McCloskey said the increases were largely a result of the increase on military assistance for Cambodian forces. Twenty of the temporary personnel at the embassy, he said, are members of military equipment delivery teams.

The Administration backtracked today, however, from an acknowledgment yesterday that American helicopters had been used over the weekend to ferry South Vietnamese troops into combat in Cambodia.

Mr. Freidheim said he had been wrong in reporting ferrying operations yesterday, but added that they might be conducted in the future "if that becomes necessary."

The determining factor, he said, would be the extent of enemy efforts to reconstitute bases in Cambodia that were raided by American ground troops last June.

Nonetheless, the White House denied reports that the United States was stepping up the air war in Indochina or changing

its policy on air operations in Cambodia.

"The basic policy has not changed in regard to the use of ground forces and air power, Mr. Ziegler asserted. "What has happened is increased air activity and increased air authority to deal with the situation created by the dry season."

When American air operations in Cambodia were concluded last June 30, President Nixon asserted that the United

States would conduct "air interdiction missions against the enemy efforts to move supplies and personnel through Cambodia toward South Vietnam and to re-establish base areas relevant to the war in Vietnam."

We do this to protect our forces in South Vietnam."

In response to Congressional pressure, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said on several occasions that American aircraft would not conduct tactical operations in close combat support of Cambodian units.

Other officials, including Secretary of State William P. Rogers, acknowledged that there might be "dual benefits" of the interdiction operations.