

South Vietnamese Drive In Cambodia Is Reported

Saigon Officials Say 2,500 Troops Joined 7,500 Already Over Border to Sweep Sanctuaries—U.S. Gives Air Aid

By The Associated Press FEB 4 1971

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 3 — South Vietnamese officials reported tonight that 10,000 Government troops were engaged in a new campaign in Cambodia to clean out what were described as enemy border sanctuaries.

The United States, they said, is providing full air support.

Only 2,500 fresh South Vietnamese troops were reported to have been sent across the border for the sweep. The 7,500 others were already operating in the country, officials noted.

The officials said that the operation had been under way for about a week but that no major fighting had been reported so far.

The South Vietnamese, the officials reported, were covering an area up to 20 miles in-

side Cambodia. [In Washington, informed Administration sources said the sweep was under way in the so-called Fishhook area of Cambodia. They stressed that it had no connection with the larger operation being conducted by South Vietnamese and American forces in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam.]

Officials said intelligence had indicated no major activity by Communist-led forces along the section of the border that is part of South Vietnam's Military Region III, which includes Saigon. But one official said that the South Vietnamese were going back through the sanctuary areas there "to be sure we haven't missed anything that would endanger the withdraw-

Continued on Page 3, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

al of United States troops."

South Vietnamese and American troops swept through the border areas in May and June, destroying enemy bases and seizing arms and ammunition. United States ground troops are now barred from entering Cambodia by Congressional legislation.

While some officials saw the current drive as a fresh screen for the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, others described it simply as an opportunity for Lieut. Gen. Do Cao Tri, an aggressive field commander, to deliver new blows to Communist forces. General Tri, who commands Military Region III, led the South Vietnamese elements of the incursion into the border sanctuaries last spring.

The United States air role

in the sweep was said to include providing helicopter gunships, medical evacuation helicopters and logistical support. The officials said the United States was also sending in B-52's and tactical fighter-bombers to attack targets as required.

This, it was said, represented a change in the way American support has been provided from Military Region III for South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia.

Before the current operation, officials said, the South Vietnamese would request helicopter support and each request would be reviewed on its merits.

"Now," one official said, "when the Vietnamese call for helicopters they don't have to be cleared."

With the sweep, General Tri is apparently trying to keep the enemy off balance until the rainy season begins in June,

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1971



GUARDING ROUTE 4: Cambodian soldiers protecting part of a convoy of 34 fuel trucks that ended 148-mile journey from Kompong Som on the coast to Pnompenh on Tuesday. It was the first convoy to make the trip in two months.

United Press International

when maneuvering and supplying are difficult. The rainy season extends until next November, officials noted, saying that the action would thus buy time for thousands more American troops to withdraw.

About 20,000 United States combat troops are to be withdrawn from the Military Region III during the next three months. This will leave only 5,000 United States combat troops in the region, plus support troops.

Raids on Trail Continue

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, Feb. 3 — The United States command today reported continued raids by B-52's over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

As for war action in South Vietnam, the command said enemy forces shelled three United States installations yesterday and this morning, wounding four Americans.

The casualties reportedly re-

sulted from a mortar barrage on a Marine Corps position near Danang and a rocket attack on the headquarters area of the Americal Division at Chulai.

The command also announced that two American soldiers had been killed and one wounded in an attack by enemy troops on a convoy of United States engineers near Nhatrang.

Americans reported killing 17 enemy soldiers in three other engagements, without suffering any casualties.

In a delayed announcement, the command also reported the crash Monday night of an Air Force fighter - bomber in Ratanakiri Province in north-east Cambodia. The pilot was killed.