

Rogers Talks of A Free Hand

Washington

Secretary of State William P. Rogers said yesterday "there is no reason why South Vietnam should be under any restrictions militarily" in operations against the enemy.

Following his statement to a meeting of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a State Department spokesman, Charles Bray, declared that Rogers' context was Laos and Cambodia, and did not include North Vietnam.

However, Rogers denounced North Vietnam's use of safe havens in pressing the war against South Vietnam.

"It makes no sense under the rules of war, international law or equity to let an enemy occupy territory and use it against our forces and use it with impunity," Rogers said.

Noting that the area around Sepon in Laos, astride the Ho Chi Minh trail, has been a battleground

since 1965, Rogers added:

"There is no reason at all, legally or morally why the enemy should benefit from a safe haven."

At another point Rogers said that if the war were conducted in such a way that the only alternatives are defensive, then the allied side is going to have trouble. He said that when the enemy was in Cambodia, the South Vietnamese were at their mercy.

"There is no reason why South Vietnam should be under any restrictions militarily," he declared.

Rogers praised the South Vietnamese army, saying it is "developing a military resolve that is very encouraging."

Noting the opposition to the United States air support given to the South Vietnamese operation in Laos, Rogers said, "in the long run, I believe this decision will be construed as a very wise decision indeed."

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