

Cambodia Says U.S. Planes Killed 15

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BANGKOK, Thailand, Feb. 27—Cambodia charged today that United States planes bombed a town in northwestern Cambodia two days ago, killing 15 persons and wounding 40 others. American Embassy and military officials in Bangkok immediately characterized the charges as "ridiculous and completely without any truth."

The Cambodian report, broadcast throughout the day today by Phnom Penh radio and monitored here, said that two separate attacks by what were described as F-3 jets occurred in the morning and afternoon of Feb. 25 on Siem Reap town and on the airport, the planes turning north toward Thailand after they had allegedly dropped their bombs.

It was believed that the planes to which the Cambodian broadcast referred were F-111 jets. A number of these planes were stationed at air bases in Thailand during the Vietnam war and used for air strikes over Indochina. But American and Thai officials said that the last American warplanes left Thailand last December.

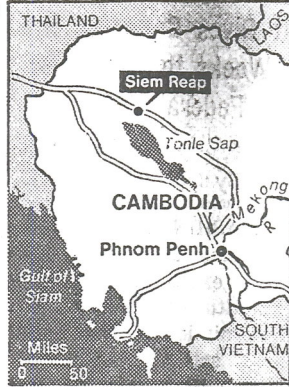
Detailed Report on 'Attack'

The broadcast described the "attack" in considerably more detail than most statements from the Cambodian Communists, leading most analysts here to believe that some sort of incident did take place. It was read by Cambodia's Information Minister, Hu Nim, who makes only the most important Government statements.

He reported that the first sortie by "one United States imperialist jet plane—an F-3 type—flying at high altitude" took place at 8:30 A.M. Wednesday, dropping a "500 kilogram bomb" that left a crater more than 20 feet deep and 30 feet in diameter.

The second attack "on the same spot" came the same day at 2:30 P.M., the Information Minister reported.

"The bombing on these two occasions caused heavy damage to Siem Reap town, especially the hospital, the child care center and schools, and killed 15



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people, combatants and children, and wounded more than 40 others,' Mr. Nim continued.

The extraordinary broadcast touched off widespread speculation here as to its significance and the events in that sealed country that could have caused such a report.

The most likely possibilities seemed to involve the presence of some dissident elements, either inside Cambodia or infiltrated from among the Cambodian refugees who now line the border on the Thai side.

Some analysts believed that an attack had taken place on Siem Reap—the nearest town

to the ruins of Angkor Wat and only about 70 miles from the nearest point on the Thai border. The Cambodians, who have refused to admit to any dissident elements operating in the country, would have felt it necessary to explain explosions in Siem Reap and chose this as the most acceptable alternative.

Other possibilities ranged from planes dispatched from Vietnam or Laos to a fabrication in an effort to retaliate against Thai charges earlier this week that Cambodian warships had attacked Thai fishing boats in the Gulf of Thailand last month and sank one of them.

Relations between the two countries, which had been thought to be improving following discussions between them last fall in Bangkok, are now in question. A second conference that was to have taken place today was canceled last week by the Cambodians.

Tonight's statement by the American Embassy here said "The report is ridiculous and completely without any truth. No such U.S. planes are in Thailand. No U.S. planes from any where were involved in such an incident."