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Growing U.S. Air Role in Cambodia Seen as Move to Buy Time

By A[illegible]VIN SHUSTER

Spe[illegible] The New York Times

SAIGO[illegible] South Vietnam, Jan. [illegible]—Shor[illegible] after American troops went into Cambodia for two months last spring to join South Vietnamese forces, in attacking enemies supply bases, President Nixon said at a news conference that "when we come out our logistical support and air support will also come out with them."

News Analysis

The South Vietnamese remain[illegible] and so did the American air support.

The nature of that support, however, remained a mystery until the last few days. Conscious of the Congressional prohibitions against again [illegible] of ground troops, the [illegible] that too much of [illegible] kind of support would [illegible] antiwar spirit at home and memories of the early days of Vietnam, the military command engaged in a concentrated effort to prevent the flow of [illegible] about the expanding American role in Cambodia.

A few details trickled out after the South Vietnamese [illegible] their operations [illegible] to clear a vital Cambodian highway. And yesterday the White House acknowledged what had been generally suspected—that all the military's air combat weapons could be used in the Cambodian war.

Air Involvement Grows

With that kind of latitude, the air involvement has increased along with enemy harassment to include B-52 strikes, helicopter gunships, logistical supply missions, close air support, and, most recently, the dispatch of two helicopter gunships to the Gulf of Siam off Cambodia.

"The situation is not critical in Cambodia," said an American official. "But the Communists are more active. And we must buy time now, time for Cambodia, for South Vietnam and for ourselves. If the air role is escalating, that's three reasons."

Cambodians need time until the rainy season in May, when enemy pressures ease, when they can catch their breath, try to improve their armed [illegible] come home the soonest [illegible] to South Vietnam [illegible] for training.

The South Vietnamese [illegible] to keep the enemy [illegible] in Cambodia [illegible] time to develop [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Cambodians [illegible] whether the [illegible] activity violates the spirit of the Congressional [illegible] debatable [illegible]

[illegible] South Vietnamese [illegible] that [illegible] moved [illegible] with [illegible] full [illegible] that we would [illegible] Gonaw support of all [illegible] are those who [illegible] the American [illegible] Vietnam [illegible] to demand [illegible] support [illegible] officers say [illegible] the advantage [illegible] States to provide [illegible]

Demonstration of S[illegible]

The heavier [illegible] power remains [illegible] the present pattern [illegible] china war. The Adm[illegible] may be trying [illegible] public at home that [illegible] winding down for the [illegible] cans in Vietnam but [illegible] trying to demonstrate to [illegible] that it is far from weak.

With the low ebb of military action in Vietnam, and hence fewer targets, American air power is being stepped up on [illegible]

[illegible] next year." He's going to [illegible] China."

[illegible] that the [illegible] intends [illegible] national par[illegible] in Cam[illegible] however [illegible] volve[illegible]

[illegible] the same [illegible] under the [illegible] announced level of 20[illegible]

[illegible] may be [illegible]

[illegible] the current dry season [illegible] it would be in the election year of 1972. "You will have to go all out this time," said one. "I can't see the President ordering the same levels of ac-