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U. S. BOMB TALLY GIVEN FOR MARCH

Total Dropped in Cambodia
Put at About 39,000 Tons

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WASHINGTON, April 25—

The United States dropped nearly 39,000 tons of bombs on Cambodia in March, according to Defense Department tabulations.

Since March the United States has accelerated its bombing in Cambodia.

The Defense Department however, continued to maintain secrecy about daily bombing operations and targets in Cambodia.

At the Pentagon's daily press briefing, Jerry W. Friedheim, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, suggested that the disclosure of such information would jeopardize diplomatic "negotiations in which we are involved."

While he described diplomatic considerations as the "controlling" reasons behind the secrecy, Mr. Friedheim also said that there were military considerations.

"It is in the best interest of the pilots," he said under questioning, "not to engage in day-by-day disclosure of specific rates of bombing and tactics."

However, some indication of the bombing rate in Cambodia came from the Southeast Asia division in Mr. Friedheim's public-affairs office in the Pentagon. On an unclassified basis, that office keeps a monthly tabulation of "allied air munitions expenditures in Southeast Asia."

Latest Tabulation Cited

The latest tabulation shows that in March "allied" forces—South Vietnamese as well as American—dropped 39,539 tons of bombs. The South Vietnamese contribution to this total, however, according to Defense officials, was "insignificant."

The United States bombed intermittently in Cambodia in the three final weeks of February, and then on a daily basis starting March 1. Currently, the United States is reportedly sending about 60 B-52's and 140 F-4 and F-111 fighter-bombers on daily bombing missions against targets in Cambodia. Each B-52 carries an average bomb load of 20 tons, the F-4 2.5 tons and the F-111 four tons.

At the outset of the sustained bombing operations, the concentration was on North Vietnamese supply lines and bases in eastern and northern Cambodia near the South Vietnamese border. But increasingly in the last month, according to Congressional aides who have been briefed on the operations, the emphasis has shifted to bombing against the Cambodian "insurgent" forces that placed the Cambodian Government forces on the defensive and at times virtually cut off the supply routes to the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh.

For February, the bombing total listed by the Pentagon was 70,002 tons, meaning that since the Vietnam cease-fire agreement went into effect on Jan. 28 nearly 110,000 tons of bombs have been dropped by Allied forces, primarily by the United States.

In February, most of the bombing operations were in Laos, where United States air operations continued until a cease-fire was agreed upon Feb. 22 by the various Laotian factions.

Other Totals Given

In January, when the United States was bombing targets in North and South Vietnam as well as Laos, the total was 101,392 tons. For December, the total was 95,490 tons, and this would include the heavy B-52 strikes against targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

With the March addition, the total of bombs dropped by the allied side since 1966 was said to have risen to 7,288,965 tons.

A Defense Department spokesman said that the Pentagon as yet did not have any precise figures on how much the daily bombing in Cambodia was costing, although Air Force figures indicate that the daily cost comes to about \$1.8-million.

Nor, according to the Pentagon spokesman, has a decision been reached on how to pay for the Cambodian bombing, which represents an expense not covered by the military budget for the current fiscal year.

The Defense Department has two budgetary alternatives: asking for a supplementary appropriation, which would have to be approved by both houses of Congress, or requesting authority to transfer funds within the over-all Defense budget. This transfer could be made with the permission of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

Presumably the Defense Department would prefer the latter course since that would avoid the possibility of a bruising floor fight in the Senate over the constitutionality of as well as the need for the bombing in Cambodia.

The Defense Department earlier this month asked the Appropriations Committees for permission to transfer \$1.2-billion in funds within the Defense budget. Most of it would go for a pay increase that went into effect in January, but some would be used to cover the cost of the December bombing, which was not covered by the Defense budget.