

# State Department Asserts Sihanouk Solicited Raids

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WASHINGTON, July 25—The State Department today defended the 1969-70 secret bombing of Cambodia by asserting that Prince Norodom Sihanouk, then Cambodia's leader, solicited the secret American raids to rid his country of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces.

At the same time, the department sought to refute the views of several senators who suggested yesterday that Secretary of State William P. Rogers had been less than candid about the systematic B-52 raids when he discussed Cambodia in closed hearings of the Foreign Relations Committee in April, 1970.

Charles W. Bray 3d, the department spokesman, said that Mr. Rogers mentioned the raids in testimony on April 2 and April 27, 1970, and that at least three senators had asked questions about the raids.

## Not Free With Details

But the spokesman acknowledged that Mr. Rogers had not volunteered details on the magnitude of the raids which became public only last week.

Mr. Bray said he "presumed" that if Mr. Rogers had been asked by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for details of the raids, he would have provided them. But in fact, Mr. Bray added, no such detailed questions were asked.

The disclosure of the secret raids came last week after a former Air Force major, Hal M. Knight of Memphis, told the Senate Armed Services committee that early in 1970, he participated in widespread falsification of records being circulated within the military. The false records showed the bombing targets to be in Vietnam.

After Mr. Knight's disclosure, the Pentagon acknowledged that between March, 1969, and May, 1970, more than 3,600 sorties by B-52's were carried out in Cambodia, close to the South Vietnamese border. More than 100,000 tons of bombs were dropped on points described as Communist sanctuaries.

The magnitude of the bombing came as a shock to many members of Congress and to many State Department officials.

The department made public its accounts of the exchanges with Prince Sihanouk to support its contention that the raids had his sanction and therefore did not violate the neutrality or sovereignty of Cambodia.

## During Diplomatic Mission

The first such exchange, the department said, took place on Jan. 10, 1968, when Chester W. Bowles, then the Ambassador to India, was sent on a special mission to Phnom Penh to discuss with Prince Sihanouk the re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

At that time, there was considerable discussion in the American press about the possibility that American troops based in South Vietnam might cross the border into Cambodia in "hot pursuit" of Communist troops going back and forth into South Vietnam.

According to the State Department version of the Bowles talks, Prince Sihanouk "stated that while he could not say so officially, the United States had the opportunity to exercise hot pursuit."

"He said he would not mind the United States going into the unpopulated area," the account continued, "and while he might protest to both those seeking sanctuary in Cambodia and those exercising hot pursuit, he would be very glad if the United States solved his problem."

According to the State Department version, Prince Sihanouk said "he could not be opposed to hot pursuit in uninhabited areas since the United States would thereby be liberating Cambodia."

"He said he wanted the United States to force the Vietcong to leave Cambodia," the account continued, "and that in unpopulated areas, where there are no Cambodians, he would shut his eyes."

The second exchange with Prince Sihanouk, the State Department said, took place in August, 1969, five months after the secret bombing had begun. In the midst of a long conversation with the Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, a long-time friend, the Cambodian Chief of State was quoted as saying that "there had not been Cambodian protests of bombings in his country when these hit only Vietcong and not Cambodian villages or population."

Mr. Bray said that "in this context, it is our view that during the period under discussion, March, 1969, to May, 1970, and to the best of our present ability to assemble facts, the only protests, public or private, which we received from the Cambodian Government involved those relatively few instances when there was accidental damage to Cambodian property, houses, livestock, or injury to Cambodians."

But Senator Mansfield, when asked about the State Department version of his conversation with Prince Sihanouk, said, "I don't recall that in any way, shape or form."

"To the best of my knowledge," Senator Mansfield added, "Sihanouk never mentioned the fact of the bombing."

Mr. Bray, when told about this, said that as the conversation occurred four years ago, "I don't find it surprising that the gentleman could not recollect."

## Chairmen Are Divided

Senator J. W. Fulbright, the committee chairman, said that he did not remember Mr. Rogers's saying anything about the bombing.

But on the House side, Representative Thomas E. Morgan, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said that his panel had been informed, and "we knew they were bombing sanctuaries over there at Sihanouk's invitation."

Prince Sihanouk, leader of a Cambodian government in exile that he formed after being ousted by a coup d'état in March, 1970, told The New York Times in a cablegram yesterday that he never authorized the raids. But American officials have not said that he was asked for authorization, only that he gave his tacit approval.

Prince Sihanouk's message said, in full:

"The disclosure made by the Defense Department of the United States — to the effect that American air strikes against Cambodia were carried out beginning at the start of 1969—quite simply proves that already, at that time, the United States Government was working toward the overthrow of the Khmer Chief of State, Norodom Sihanouk, because those bombing raids were certainly not carried out against so-called Vietcong sanctuaries, but in fact against Cambodian garrisons and villages.

"The raids were intended to convince the Cambodian people that I was incapable of bringing them peace. As for the assertion that I authorized those raids against my own people and my own country, that is like saying that I authorized the C.I.A. to carry out, along with the Lon Nol clique,





Associated Press

Smoke from U.S. bombs dropped to support Cambodian soldiers near Phnom Penh. British and Australian embassies are urging nationals to leave the threatened city.

the coup d'état of March 18, 1970, against myself."

The decision to begin the secret bombing of Cambodia was made by the National Security Council at the White House in March, 1969, the Pentagon has said, in order to protect American forces in South Vietnam and provide for the start of the withdrawal of some of them that spring.

Mr. Bray could not provide any information on whether the United States contacted Prince Sihanouk about the start of the bombing.

That he did not protest was apparently interpreted in Washington as a sign that the Prince approved, and secrecy was maintained for fear that public

disclosure would lead to a protest and force the end of the raids.

Mr. Rogers testified in a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after Prince Sihanouk's ouster, and amid speculation that the United States and South Vietnam would invade Cambodia. The invasion began on April 30 and May 1, 1970.

#### 'Our Hearts Are Pure'

Full transcripts of the April 2 and April 27 testimony have not been made public, but excerpts made available to The Times yesterday quoted Mr. Rogers as saying, "Cambodia is one country where we can say with complete assurance that

our hands are clean and our hearts are pure."

Mr. Bray said today that these excerpts "may not fully reflect what the Secretary told the committee or the sense of the discussion."

He said that Mr. Rogers, on April 2 in his opening remarks, "ran through the recent history of United States relations with Cambodia, noting the gradually improving relations which had led to the re-establishment of embassies, and noted that from time to time, the Cambodian Government made statements that made it clear that it did not object to bombings by the United States in Cambodia so long as there were no Cambodians in the area."