

24 Casualties

2nd Cambodia Town Bombed By Mistake

Phnom Penh

A United States F-111 struck a friendly village yesterday in another bombing error near the Cambodian naval base where a misdirected American air attack Monday left more than 400 casualties.

The second bombing mistake in 24 hours killed eight persons and wounded 16 in a village on Tachor Island on the Mekong River, Cambodian military sources said. The island is six miles from Neak Luong, the town where the U.S. Embassy said B-52 bombs killed 137 persons and wounded 268 Monday.

In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman said the bombs dropped yesterday on the island village — Koh Tachou — fell 1800 feet from the intended target on the west bank of the Mekong River.

The spokesman, Jerry W. Friedheim, said the second accidental bombing may have been caused by an equipment malfunction. He said it was not yet known what the malfunction was.

The U.S. Embassy said 56 of the 137 killed in the Neak Luong bombing Monday were government soldiers. At least 137 of the 268 wounded were government troops, the embassy said.

TOLL

Cambodian officers in Neak Luong said 189 men, women and children were killed and 315 wounded. At least 96 of the dead were government soldiers, the officers said.

By either count, the error was the worst bombing accident of the Indochina war. The U.S. bombing of the South Vietnamese village of Lang Vei in 1967 killed 83 villagers and wounded 176.

Colonel David H. E. Op-

ker, a U.S. attache who visited Neak Luong four hours after the bombing Monday, said:

"People were sad, but they accepted that this is war and these things happen. There was no animosity. I tried to say I was sorry. But how can you say you're sorry."

A photographer who went

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to Neak Luong after Monday's bombing said 50 per cent of the town of about 7000 soldiers and civilians was destroyed or badly damaged.

RUBBLE

He said the main street was reduced to rubble. He said some survivors ran when they heard aircraft in which he was a passenger approaching. They thought planes were returning to bomb Neak Luong again.

Cambodian officers in Neak Luong said two B-52s bombed the town, not one B-52 as the U.S. Embassy reported. The officer said 60 bombs hit the town and that all but three exploded.

Cambodians coming here yesterday from Neak Luong, 32 miles southeast of Phnom

Penh, said a U.S. officer visited Tachor island to inspect bombing damage from the second reported accident.

"He admitted it was a mistake," said one of the Cambodians.

No fighting was reported on the island at the time of the attack. U.S. planes, in-

SFCronicle AUG 8 1973 New Reports Of Air Raid Coverups

Washington

American servicemen were routinely ordered to falsify official reports of attacks by U.S. fighter-bombers as much as 100 miles into Cambodian territory, two former Air Force intelligence officers testified yesterday.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, they said that American planes were routinely used in direct combat support of Cambodian government troops deep in Cambodian territory, contrary to public statements by the Nixon administration in 1970.

U.S. officials said in 1970 that American air attacks in Cambodia might benefit the Phnom Penh government but only as a by-product of their primary job of protecting American troops from North Vietnamese forces in sanctuary areas of Cambodia adjacent to the South Vietnamese border.

Announcing on June 3, 1970, that American troops would be out of Cambodia by the end of that month, President Nixon said in a televised address:

"The only remaining American activity in Cambodia after July 1 will be air missions to interdict the movement of enemy troops and materiel where I find it is necessary to protect the lives and security of our men in South Vietnam."

cluding B-52s, were bombing both banks of the river, where Communist-led insurgents have been reported.

Thomas Enders, acting U.S. ambassador, sent an official apology to Cambodian President Lon Nol for the Neak Luong mishap, expressing America's "profound condolences to the victims and their families."

American planes kept up their raids against guerrilla troops around Phnom Penh yesterday and today.

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The Pentagon announced two weeks later that U.S. fighter planes had been striking into Cambodia. It

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described the raids as interdiction of new enemy supply and troop concentrations.

Former Air Force Captain George R. Moses of Falls Church, Va., said yesterday that between May 1970, when U.S. troops were dispatched into Cambodia, and April 1971 he daily covered up several flights of U.S. planes west of the Mekong River in Cambodia.

He said U.S. tactical aircraft were often called to the defense of the Cambodian troops under siege from insurgents in various towns not far from the capital city

of Phnom Penh.

Moses and Air Force Captain Maurice O'Connell said that when the fighter planes returned, their missions were reported as having been conducted east of the Mekong River in an area close to the tri-border area of Laos, South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Their testimony followed earlier revelations that 3630 attacks in Cambodia by B-52 bombers during the 14 months preceding May 1970 were falsely reported to have occurred elsewhere.

The statements by Moses and O'Connell were the first public testimony that re-

ords were falsified of raids by smaller, tactical aircraft in Cambodia after May 1970.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, informed the committee that 156 tactical air attacks were carried out in a covert operation that began six days before U.S. troops entered Cambodia in 1970.

The Pentagon said the figure covered tactical raids that took place in April and May 1970 and that a check was being made to see if there were more such raids later.

In a letter to the committee, Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements said that data on the raids was discovered during a review of statistics stored in a computer system.

SORTIES

Clements also notified the committee that the same re-

view had identified 180 secret B-52 bombing sorties conducted in Northern Laos. These sorties, from February 1970 to April 26, 1972, had been listed as occurring in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Pentagon officials previously had acknowledged to the committee that covert bombing operations were carried out in Laos and they gave diplomatic reasons as the explanation for the secrecy.

Three other witnesses — all former Army Green Berets — told the committee about secret spy missions inside Laos and Cambodia, secret combat missions in Laos after Congress had forbidden such activity and a cash bounty promised for any Communist prisoners captured alive in Laos or Cambodia.

The Green Beret witnesses were former Captain Randolph Harrison of Orlando, Fla.; former Sergeant John Myers of Trenton, N.J., and former Sergeant Thomas J. Marzulo of Stamford, Conn.

Marzulo told of one instance in early 1971 when a team of Green Berets and their South Vietnamese comrades — about 30 men in all — were sent into Laos for combat rather than intelligence gathering.

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