

Pentagon Report on Secret

Washington

The Defense Department acknowledged yesterday that the U.S. conducted tactical air operations in support of the Cambodian government in 1970 and 1971, with the air attacks kept secret through a system of dual reports.

Between July, 1970, and February, 1971, according to a Pentagon "white paper" submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee, U.S. planes conducted 3634 tactical sorties — (one raid by one plane) — to help support Cambodian government forces.

As in the case of B-52 bomber raids in Cambodia between March and May, 1970, which were confirmed by the Pentagon last month, a system of dual reporting was worked out to help conceal the tactical air attacks.

The tactical air raids in support of the Cambodian government were reported at the time as having been conducted against North Vietnamese supply centers in eastern Cambodia.

REQUEST

The first definitive Pentagon explanation of the air operations in Cambodia in 1970 and 1971 was contained in a 32-page white paper submitted in response to a request from the Senate Armed Services Committee for a "simple, concise ac-

Cambodians Land Behind Rebels

Phnom Penh

Government reinforcements from Phnom Penh made an amphibious landing behind Communist lines in the southern part of embattled Kompong Cham early yesterday morning, the military command reported.

Colonel Am Rong said the government "scored many successes and retook many parts of the city," although field reports said the rebels still held the hospital in the northern part of the city.

Reinforcements continued to pour into Kompong Cham by river convoy and helicopters landing at Tonle Bet across the Mekong river from Cambodia's third largest city, 47 miles northeast of Phnom Penh.

Diplomatic sources said

government defenders attempted to retake the hospital compound but were driven back by heavy insurgent fire.

Casualty reports from the city were unavailable.

Am Rong said, "The Communists are also moving troops into Kompong Cham." He reported insurgent trucks were seen by a Cambodian spotter plane moving toward the city from the west along Highway 7.

Propeller-driven T-28s were called in to bomb the trucks, and Am Rong reported that a few of the vehicles were destroyed.

Am Rong admitted the insurgents had captured a number of old French armored cars at the beginning of the battle in the city.

Associated Press

rate, top-secret reports were sent to a few civilian and military officials giving the actual details of the raids.

SYSTEM

The white paper defended the dual reporting system as a necessary secrecy precaution to conceal the B-52 operations in view of the "sensitive" political situation in Cambodia. It also denied that there had been any falsification of reports since it argued that officials with a "need-to-know" were provided with correct information.

"No one was required to make any input to this formal reporting system that the individual knew, or should have known, to be incorrect," the report said. "The procedures permitted only correct formal reporting," it said, with "all appropriate civilian and military decision makers provided with 'accurate and complete command and control data' throughout the B-52 bombing operations.

As described by the Defense Department, the system of "attributed targets" was ordered by field commanders without the knowledge or approval of the Pentagon. The Pentagon also said that this dual reporting system was ordered stopped in February, 1971, after it was discovered more or less by chance when duplicate data was re-

count" of air and ground operations in Cambodia and Laos over the years.

The white paper concentrated on the controversy stirred up by the disclosure that with White House approval, the system of dual reporting was devised to

conceal B-52 bomber operations in Cambodia in 1969 and 1970.

Under this system, the B-52 bombers attacks in Cambodia were officially listed as having been conducted against targets in South Vietnam, while sepa-

Cambodia Raids

ceived on a plane that was lost in action.

The air attacks in support of the Cambodian government were conducted at a time when publicly the Nixon administration was porclaiming that air operations in Cambodia were limited to interdiction of North Viet-

namese troops and supplies moving through Cambodia into South Vietnam.

The Pentagon report also disclosed that during 1970 American Special Forces troops led 422 reconnaissance and interdiction patrols into Laos in the face of a 1969 amendment passed by

Congress prohibiting the introduction of American ground troops into Laos.

Senator Harold E. Hughes, (Dem-Iowa) said this raised a "serious question as to whether the law forbidding the use of American ground forces in Laos has been observed." *New York Times*