

GAO Report

Cambodia Role Of U.S. Team Hit

Washington

A 73-man U.S. military team in Cambodia is actually functioning as an advisory group in apparent violation of a 1971 congressional ban, the General Accounting Office charged yesterday.

The GAO, in a 92-page report on U.S. operations in Cambodia, also said there has been a considerable number of questionable financial transactions by both U.S. and Cambodian officials in the three years since American aid to the Phnom Penh government resumed.

It charged, too, that state and defense department officials and U.S. military officers, including Admiral John S. McCain Jr., the former Pacific commander, tried to hinder its investigation and blocked access to some vital information.

DENIAL

The Defense Department denied that its Military Equipment Delivery Team had violated the congressional ban. It said members were in the field in Cambodia merely to gather infor-

mation necessary to a smooth supply operation.

The GAO report cited congressional bans on sending either combat troops or U.S. military advisers to Cambodia, and said that while Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird claimed in 1971 the government was abiding by the rules, in fact it was not doing so.

"As the Cambodia staff increased it assumed additional duties and became more involved with the Cambodian military. Except for not assigning advisers to specific field units, MEDT operated much the same as a military assistance advisory group," the report said.

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