

NY TIMES
Futile Cambodia P.O.W. Raid Reported

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 19 (AP)—Three hundred South Vietnamese paratroopers, airlifted by helicopter, raided a camp just inside Cambodia where 20 Americans were believed held but found it empty, informed sources reported today.

The raid, carried out last Sunday with American helicopter gunships flying as escorts, reportedly resulted, however, in the capture of 30 enemy soldiers. The raiding party was led by Lieut. Gen Do Cao Tri, who directed South Vietnam's campaign against enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia last spring.

"It worked perfectly," one officer said of the three hour raid. "We suffered no casualties in Cambodia."

The raid was said to have been based on intelligence reports that American prisoners were being held in an area

west of the Cambodian town of Mimot along Route 7. Mimot is 75 miles northwest of Saigon and about five miles inside Cambodia.

The informants said American ground advisers had accompanied the paratroops to the border.

General Tri, who commands the Third Military Zone around Saigon, landed with the raiding party, which was transported by a fleet of South Vietnamese helicopters.

Sontay Raid is Recalled

The operation recalled the unsuccessful raid Nov. 21 by helicopter-borne American commandos on the Sontay prisoner-of-war camp 20 miles west of Hanoi in North Vietnam. Highly trained soldiers made both raids.

In both cases, they found no American prisoners, but the operations were carried off with precision.

From time to time, there have been intelligence reports that Americans captured in South Vietnam were being held in border camps in Cambodia. The number is not believed to be large.

The informants would not say whether the camp in Cambodia has been in use recently.

The raid was part of a 6,000-man operation by South Vietnamese paratroops, rangers and armor under General Tri's command in a wide area in South Vietnam's Tay Ninh Province and across the border to Mimot.

The operation is aimed at cleaning up the area. Recent sharp fighting in the region indicates that North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops have returned and are trying to re-establish the sanctuaries on the Cambodian side raided by the allies in May and June.

*17 Jan 71

See this file
 27 Nov 70,
 "POWs and Football."