

State Department Says U.S. Can Arm Laos and Cambodia

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5 (Reuters)—The United States can continue to supply arms to the Governments of Laos and Cambodia under the Vietnam cease-fire agreement, the State Department said today.

A department spokesman, John King, gave this opinion in commenting on a report published Saturday in The New York Times that there was a disagreement between the State and Defense Departments over the interpretation of this point in the accords.

The report said that the Pentagon felt a provision requiring foreign countries to refrain from military activities in

the two Southeast Asian nations—including the reintroduction of troops and matériel—prohibited American military aid in the future.

For Self-Defense

But Mr. King said that Article 20 of the Vietnam agreement, which contains the provision banning reintroduction of troops and arms, allows the supply of arms to Cambodia and Laos for self-defense.

As justification for this position, he cited Paragraph A of Article 20, which calls on those signing the Vietnam agreement to adhere to the Geneva accords of 1954 and 1962. It is these accords that allow the supply of arms for self-defense, the spokesman explained.

American military aid to Laos and Cambodia together is currently running at about \$500-million annually.