

Cambodia Bombing Is Jointly Planned

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By MALCOLM W. BROWNE
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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 19—United States air support for the Cambodian war effort against the Communists apparently continues each day without renewed Government-to-Government requests but with the continuous cooperation of American and Cambodian military planners.

Asked today about the processes by which American air strikes are planned in Cambodia, a United States spokesman here replied: "How many times must we tell you that such questions can be answered only by CINCPAC or Washington? We have no comment."

CINCPAC is the term used for headquarters of the United States Commander in Chief, Pacific, situated in Honolulu.

At a news conference today, Cambodia's Information Minister, Keam Reth, was also asked whether President Lon Nol had specifically requested American bombing and if so, when.

Mr. Keam Reth replied: "The President has contacted high-ranking Americans and also has made requests for matériel, but never for American manpower. I cannot specify the date of the request, which is secret."

Specific Targets Designated

Broadly speaking, American air support to Cambodia's hard-fighting army follows the general Indochina pattern of tactical and strategic planning, which often overlap.

In Indochina, tactical air support theoretically refers only to attacks by low-level fighter-bombers on specific enemy concentrations that are in contact with troops of countries allied with the United States. Strategic support technically means the kind of high-level bombing carried out by B-52's over supply arteries, notably the Ho Chi Minh trail.

In fact, B-52 raids have been used increasingly here, as elsewhere in Indochina, as direct tactical support of field units.

Tactical strikes, here as in Laos, are coordinated by an American controller, normally in a plane, who relays requests from Cambodian field commanders to the American aircraft, giving specific map coordinates for the targets.

For the strategic sorties, most of which are carried out at night, the general practice has been to hold a joint conference in each military region of the country involved each afternoon at which local commanders present their arguments for bombing certain targets during the next 24 hours.

Priorities Must Be Set

Normally, both the local and the American participants in the regional conferences tend to request more sorties than they expect to get, and higher American headquarters, subordinate to the Pacific Command headquarters at Honolulu, must apportion priorities.

But since the heavy bombers are being used increasingly in the tactical role, to relieve hard-pressed troops, encircled towns or blockades of roads and waterways, targets are often changed even while the bombers are in flight. This requires quick communication between ground and air.

The United States has no military advisers in Cambodia and its large complement of military men serve mostly either with the military equipment delivery team or the United States Embassy itself in attaché roles.

Despite the absence of a formal military establishment here, the Americans engaged in coordinating air support—who do not wear uniforms—have ample equipment for the job.

Apart from requests from Cambodian commanders for sorties, American air support also depends on standard American air reconnaissance techniques designed to detect troop and vehicle movements or concentrations.



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Resort town of Keb is reported to have fallen.

Americans are not assigned to remain with Cambodian units but Americans connected with the air support program travel widely throughout Cambodia by helicopter or plane so as to familiarize themselves daily with the needs of Cambodian Commanders.

Much of the nation's territory is currently controlled by Communist forces, but since it is known that most of the Cambodian population lives in the Government-controlled zone, there appears to be no official Cambodian apprehension that there might be civilian victims in most of the raids.

Wherever the Communists are in control, the object is to kill as many of the enemy as possible, with an attendant risk of civilian casualties. Knowledgeable western diplomats here have said they believe that paign, often carried out with imprecise control, has caused high civilian casualties.

There are indications that in some instances American planners have vetoed bombing mis-

sions requested for heavily populated areas.

Coastal Town Falls

PHNOM PENH, April 19 (Reuters)—The coastal town of Keb fell to Communist forces yesterday, military sources reported today. The loss of the town, 85 miles southwest of Phnom Penh, has not been officially announced, and reports of casualties are just beginning to reach the capital.

Today Government forces were reported battling to retain two provincial capitals—Takeo, 40 miles south of here, and neighboring Tram Khnar.

The military garrison at Keb was evacuated under fire with heavy losses, the sources said. Most of the civilians, including four French missionaries, had managed to escape several days ago.

The capture of Keb, the largest urban center taken by the Communists in several years, extends their already considerable hold on Cambodia's seacoast.

Route to Seport Cut Again

PHNOM PENH, April 19 (AP)—Communist forces have again closed Route 4, Phnom Penh's only link with the deep-water seaport at Kampong Saom, reports from the field said today.

Government troops had reopened the American-built road just 10 days ago.

Reporters who visited the scene today said Government soldiers had abandoned an outpost 20 miles southwest of the capital off Route 4 and another position near Tmat Pong, a hill two miles north of the highway, after intense fighting. Twenty Government soldiers were reported to have been killed and 30 wounded in the fighting.