

Cambodian Rebels Advance

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia) — (UPI) — U.S. warplanes abruptly stopped daylight bombing of Cambodian rebel positions on the east bank of the Mekong River opposite Phnom Penh.

The rebels, who already have established fronts south and east of Phnom Penh, opened a new one northwest of the capital by capturing two towns during the day.

Although U.S. Air Force F4 and F111 tactical jets have been raiding the rebel positions daily on the river's east bank and continued to do so as late as Friday night, there were no U.S. planes in evidence over the area during the day. There was no explanation for the halt in Phnom Penh.

No Change

(Military sources in Thailand, from where the American planes fly their Cambodian missions, said the raids on the river's east bank near Phnom Penh had been canceled because they were endangering populated areas. In Washington, however, a Pentagon spokesman said there has been no official change in U.S. bombing policy in Cambodia.)

There was no indication here that the United States had cut back bombing operations elsewhere in the country. Military sources said B52 heavy bombers struck Friday night and early yesterday against rebel positions 11 miles south of Phnom Penh, and the tactical jets conducted raids around the encircled provincial capital of Takeo, 55 miles south of Phnom Penh.

Seize Two Towns

On the combat fronts, military sources said the rebels had become active about 15 miles northwest of the capital, where they captured the towns of Ang Talek and Thnat Pong. They also seized two more towns about 12 miles to the south of Phnom Penh, which were identified as Setbo and Kompong Kantuot.

The two towns seized to the northwest of Phnom Penh added another active front to the arc the rebels already have formed south and east of this capital of 1.5 million population.

Refugees, who continued streaming across from the east bank of the Mekong

River into Phnom Penh, said yesterday rebel units within five miles of Phnom Penh had burned at least 30 homes in the village of Prek Thong. Rebel units reportedly have penetrated at several points to the east bank of the river facing Phnom Penh.

The only air activity during the day over the east bank was a strafing mission flown by one Cambodian air force plane and a reconnaissance mission by an American OV10 Bronco plane, which simply circled the area.

Cambodian army units fired artillery barrages into the area, and a brief ground clash was reported during the morning outside the village of Arei Ksal near the riverbank. There were no casualties reported.

More Cambodian troops were ferried across the river yesterday, raising government forces in the area to about 1500 men. The reinforcements landed at Svay Chrum, three miles from Phnom Penh, field reports said.



PRAYER FROM CAMBODIAN PRESIDENT LON NOL
Temple visit followed Siem Riep troop inspection
—UPI Photo