U.S. Aides Confirm Drive by Laotians

VIENTIANE, Laos, July 9— United States officials, acknowledging for the first time that a new sweep was under way on the Plaine des Jarres, reported today that American-backed Laotian commandos were in control of two-thirds of the plain area.

The officials, who had previously refused to confirm reports of the operation, said the objective was to destroy Communist supplies, not to occupy the plain. Reports of the operation had been circulating since Wednesday.

Official sources indicated that hundreds of tons of food, ammunition and arms had been found in caches in the area by 12-man commando teams, who come under the formal command of the Meo leader, Gen. Vang Pao. Eighty per cent of the caches were said to contain food, including 25 cases of Vietnamese canned candy.

Frequently Changed Hands

Officials said the teams had seen no inhabitants of the area so far. This circumstance, coupled with the high percentage of food in the caches, was taken to indicate that the 5,000 people who chose to remain with the Communists while others were evacuated in 1969 had not farmed on the plain in the last 18 months.

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The plain, which until recently was held by the Communists, has changed hands periodically since 1969, with Laotion forces taking over in the monsoon season when heavy rains blocked Communist supply routes.

The commando teams reportedly have been subjected to mortar fire but have made no other contact with enemy troops.

United States officials expressed the hope that the operation, in which three battalions of commandos are engaged, would hamper the Communists' next dry-season offensie and perhaps relieve pressure on Bouam Long, northeast of the plain.

There, Meo troops and 15,000 civilians have been shelled nightly. At least 44 civilians are reported to have been killed.

Five battalions of Thais, Laotian troops and Meo tribesmen are said to be in new positions on the plain's southern rim.

U.S. Denies Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Reuters) — The State Department denied today that any United States advisers were accompanying Laotian forces.

Although President Nixon has barred the use of United States advisers in ground combat operations in Laos, there have been reports this week that Americans were leading as well as advising Laotian forces in a new offensive against Communist troops on the Plaine des Jarres.