

A Report on Bombing Coverup

Washington

President Nixon and his top aides gave Congress at

least 19 false reports on the U.S. bombing of Cambodia between 1969 and 1973, a House Judiciary Committee staff report showed yesterday.

The 80-page report, accompanied by 76 pages of maps and documents, revealed nothing new about the actual conduct of the bombing which began secretly on March 18, 1969, and continued until Aug. 15, 1973. What it did show was the systematic pattern through which the bombing was concealed from Congress.

Mr. Nixon was personally cited only once in the document, in a quote from his formal foreign policy report to Congress in Feb. 25, 1971: "In Cambodia we pursued the policy of the previous administration until North Vietnamese actions after Prince Sihanouk was deposed made this impossible."

Sihanouk was overthrown on March 18, 1970 — one year to the day after Mr. Nixon ordered the commencement of massive U.S. air attacks on reported Communist Sanctuary areas in Cambodia.

But the report by the impeachment panel staff listed repeated statements to Congress by top administration and military officials in which the truth about the U.S. air operation was concealed.

Among the aides cited were former Defense Secretaries Melvin R. Laird and Elliot Richardson, former Secretary of State William P. Rogers and former members and chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including Generals John D. McConnell, Earle G. Wheeler, John D. Ryan, and Administration Thomas H. Moorer.

Examples included:

- Laird told the Senate Armed Services Committee the day after the secret bombing began that U.S. ground rules outlawed operation in Cambodia.

- McConnell told the same committee on April 17, 1969, that he had been forbidden by higher authority to "destroy" the Cambodian sanctuaries.

- Laird and Rogers failed to tell the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee of the bombing in a secret Indochina briefing in November, 1969.

- Rogers told the foreign relations committee on April 2, 1970, that "Cambodia is one country where we can say . . . that our hands are clean."

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