

Laird says Laotian drive will hasten withdrawal

WASHINGTON AP—Secretary of State William Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said Tuesday South Vietnamese drives in Laos and Cambodia will speed the end of the U.S. ground-combat role in Vietnam.

But they left in doubt the question of when all U.S. forces would be withdrawn.

Laird told the House and Senate Armed Services Committees in separate, closed sessions that the new operations are on schedule and will enable the United States to meet or beat plans to bring home 50,000 more troops by May 1.

Rogers, speaking to newsmen after a closed hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said "the fact is we will have Americans by and large out of combat roles by the middle of this year." He declined to give a more precise date.

Rogers said also U.S. policy "contemplates a withdrawal of all of our forces eventually from South Vietnam."

But in response to another question from newsmen about residual forces that might be left behind indefinitely, he said "let's wait until we get to that."

The twin appearances by the Cabinet officers, both armed with maps and charts, came two days after several thousand South Vietnamese troops, borne by American-piloted helicopters and backed by U.S. air and artillery firepower moved against supply routes in Laos. Another 20,000 South Vietnamese have been operating in Cambodia for the past two weeks.

Both men also assured the committees that no

U.S. ground troops were involved in either operation.

Laird added, however, that some 10,000 U.S. ground troops are being used for "backup responsibilities" in South Vietnam.

Rogers said the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos, target of the latest thrust, is the "choke point" or the last major supply route available to the enemy.

Rogers, who promised new troop-withdrawal announcement by President Nixon in April, said "when people talk about war escalation it just isn't true."

He said that over the past two years casualties are down, air sorties are down and the cost of the war has been halved.

"There is practically no combat in Vietnam now," he said.

"The only conclusion I can draw is the President made clear we are operating in Laos in a way we consider in the national interest," said Foreign Relations Chairman J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark. "I have grave questions about it."

"I don't know that I could say I am reassured," said Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho.

"This new operation is new evidence this continues to be a war without end."

He called on the administration to support a joint congressional resolution stating that it is national policy to withdraw all forces from Vietnam as quickly as possible.

Asked about that proposal, Rogers said "I don't think the resolution is necessary. The President has already said it."

News Roundup

from AP reports

LOS ANGELES—Tall, slender Susan Atkins, her voice husky, testified Tuesday that she killed actress Sharon Tate. "I killed her, I stabbed her and she fell. And I stabbed her again. I don't know how many times I stabbed her and I don't know why I stabbed her," the long-haired brunette told a jury.

NEW YORK—Premier Golda Meir responded Tuesday to Egypt's call for a partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Suez Canal area with a counterproposal that both sides reduce their armed strength along the waterway. The Israeli leader also urged talks with Egypt aimed at reopening the canal, blocked by vessels sunk in the 1967 war, but said her government was not willing to tie such a move to an Israeli troop pullback in the area.

WASHINGTON—The Defense Department said Tuesday the Army has been told to continue development of a supplementary antimissile system to bolster the Safeguard missile defense program. The system, called Hardsite Defense, is built around use of modified Sprint interceptor missiles and smaller and less expensive radars than currently used in Safeguard.

WASHINGTON—The railway clerks union Tuesday threatened to renew a nation-wide rail shutdown at 12:01 a.m. March 1 at the expiration of an emergency 80-day postponement ordered by Congress. Union President C.I. Dennis said his 200,000 ticket sellers and other clerical workers would walk out then unless a new agreement is reached. Such a walkout would mean a total shutdown of the nation's railroads if other unions honor the clerks' picket lines, as they did during a 24-hour, four-union strike last December.

Rising death toll — cracked dams — fires

Los Angeles struck by massive quake

LOS ANGELES AP—A powerful earthquake staggered Southern California Tuesday, leaving at least 33 dead and trapping some 30 persons in the rubble of a collapsed hospital. Their fate was in doubt.

Eighty-thousand persons in a 20-square-mile area near a quake-weakened dam in the San Fernando Valley were ordered to evacuate the area or be forcibly removed. Authorities, in making the evacuation "mandatory," said they feared a strong new tremor might cause a flood.

Extensive damage

Property damage was extensive as walls collapsed, streets buckled and caved in, bridges fell and windows shattered in heavily populated areas

around Los Angeles, the nation's third most populous city.

The sheriff's office estimated that more than 850 persons were injured in the quake area.

In Washington, President Nixon issued a formal declaration of a major disaster, opening the way for help from more than a dozen government agencies. Vice President Spiro Agnew was due in the quake area Wednesday for consultations.

Nine of the deaths were attributed to heart attacks.

VA Hospital

Heaviest loss of life was at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Sylmar in the west end of the San Fernando Valley some 10 miles from the quake's center.

There 17 bodies were found, and about 100 persons were injured. Ten hours after the first shock an estimated 30 persons, mostly patients, were reported still trapped.

"We still have live people in there," said a spokesman.

"Rescue workers hear voices. Nobody's been able to get into the basement area. People could be alive in there."

Screams of "Help me! Help me!" could be heard as workers moved gingerly to remove rubble without endangering those trapped.

Officials at the hospital said it could be two days before they get to the bottom of the rubble.

Tall buildings swayed in downtown Los Angeles when the quake hit at 6:01 a.m. Windows shattered and walls fell out or

roofs fell in on some older structures. The city estimated that 427 buildings received structural damage, 42 sufficiently to force evacuation. The county estimated damage to its buildings alone at \$125 million.

Quake center

Seismologists placed the quake's center 26 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles in the rugged San Gabriel Mountains and assigned it a magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter scale. The scale grades anything over 7 as a major quake.

The first shock was followed by hundreds of aftershocks, one registering 5.5 on the scale.

Residents of the San Fernando Valley, with a population of 1.3 million, had a tense day as police warned them by the thousands to move out of the path of possible water flow from Van Norman Lake dam, the city's largest reservoir.

The initial shock shattered the concrete facing and caused wide fissures in its 1,500-foot main wall of compressed earth. There was some leaking and part of the dam fell into the lake. Officials began draining it and said it should reach a safe level by late Wednesday. The evacuations were ordered as a precautionary measure in the event of a strong new shock.

The dam's two lakes can hold 6.7 billion gallons of water. Both were being emptied into river beds and catch basins.

The mandatory evacuation order, officials said, came because some families refused to leave. Police equipped with loudspeakers rolled through neighborhoods, passing the word, and said any persons refusing to

leave would be removed forcibly.

Authorities estimated that 75 per cent of the 80,000 people in the area had left voluntarily. Earlier Gov. Ronald Reagan had asked for evacuation of 250,000 residents of a wider section of the valley before he flew from Sacramento for a first-hand view.

At Granada Hills in the valley's west end some 4,000 persons who fled areas near the Van Norman Lakes came by car, bus and police vehicle to a high school refugee center.

"I'd like to go back," said one, "but I'm not that dumb. It's just a house."

Most of the homes evacuated were in the \$40,000 and up class. Mrs. Fred Grunek said she left her two-story \$75,000 home after seeing every window broken and furniture tossed about.

Business continued

Despite the quake it was business almost as usual in downtown Los Angeles on Tuesday, with some exceptions. At the central library, for example, they offered free parking to anyone who would come in and help restore to shelves 100,000 books scrambled on floors.

Except for a few buildings closed for inspection, most were open for business, shattered windows and all. There was heavy absenteeism as many workers stayed home to clean up quake damage.

Employees arriving early heard scores of burglar alarms still ringing, the shriek of fire sirens and found sidewalks littered with glass.

Apollo 14 ends successfully

ABOARD USS NEW ORLEANS AP— Apollo 14 astronauts splashed down safely right on target in the South Pacific and were brought aboard this carrier Tuesday after completing man's most successful moon mission.

Astronauts Alan Shepard Jr., Stuart Roosa and Edgar Mitchell dropped into the South Pacific at 4:06 p.m. EST, ending a nine-day, 1.15-million-mile voyage.

"We're all fine in here," said Shepard, seconds after the Apollo command ship splashed into the choppy water.

"Welcome home," the carrier radioed.

"Thank you, sir," came a quick reply.

The splashdown was one of the most accurate ever achieved.

"It seems like you broke the record without much doubt," Admiral Thomas Hayward, commander of the recovery force, told the astronauts. "You were smack-dab on the target."

Scientists were delighted with the mission. During the 33½-hour stay on the moon, Shepard and

Mitchell collected rocks that may be 4.6 billion years old and they set up an atomic-powered science station already working smoothly and providing valuable information.

White-suited sailors lining the deck of this prime recovery ship cheered loudly after two subdued sonic booms first announced the spacecraft was coming down nearby.

Moments later, the spacecraft was sighted dragging two small white parachutes. These were followed by three white pilot parachutes and, finally, three huge orange and white parachutes blossomed in full view of the carrier.

The spacecraft splashed into the warm Polynesian waters, helicopters hovered overhead and swimmers leaped into the sea to secure the craft with a flotation collar so that it wouldn't sink.

The astronauts scrambled into an orange life raft. First Roosa, then Mitchell and finally Shepard were taken up into a helicopter and flown to the carrier deck.