

W
file subj.
date sub-cat.
9/70

45

Enemy Blunts Cambodian Drive

9/15/70

PHNOM PENH (AP) — Enemy troops smashed the vanguard of the Cambodian government's first major offensive of the war Monday, forcing Cambodian soldiers back after an abortive attempt to recapture an important position in the country's heartland.

Enemy gunners fired more than 400 mortar shells into forward positions of the government soldiers in the village of Taing Kauk, 55 miles north of Phnom Penh, and followed the barrage with ground assaults and volleys of rocket grenades.

Forty Cambodian soldiers were killed and nearly 50 wounded in the attack that lasted from just after midnight until past dawn.

Communist losses were given by government commanders as 20 dead left on the battleground and an estimated 200 more dead and wounded carried away during the night.

The government operation was aimed at reopening 50 miles of Route 6 from Skoun to the provincial capital of Kompong Thom, 80 miles north of

Phnom Penh. The 50-mile segment has been in enemy hands for three months.

Although an amphibious force broke the siege of Kompong Thom last Wednesday in a strike up a flood swollen river from Cambodia's huge lake of Tonle Sap, success of the entire operation would be judged on the government's ability to reopen route 6 and retake more than 1,000 square miles of rich rice and food producing area.