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Khmers Open 3-Way Drive On Red-Held Coastal Town

11/3/73

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PHNOM PENH — The Cambodian military command Thursday reported fighting in five of the country's outlying provinces, including an air, naval and land operation to retake the insurgent-held seacoast town of Kep.

Infantry troops were moving from several directions against the town, while naval artillery provided support fire from the offshore island of Koh Tonsay and fighter-bombers went into action against Khmer insurgent positions, the command said.

Kep, a resort town 84 miles southwest of Phnom Penh on the Gulf of Thailand, was captured by insurgents in April of this year.

In other military developments Cambodian government troops Wednesday night evacuated a post six miles north of Phnom Penh which had been under almost continuous

attack for six days, field reporters said Thursday.

Officers said an unknown number of the troops evacuated the post at Prek Krabao by swimming down the Mekong River, many of them clinging to empty ammunition cases, until they were picked up by naval boats. It was not known if the rebels occupied Prek Krabao.

Originally, 160 to 200 men had manned the post but officers said some had been killed and others wounded.

Troops from Prek Luong, two miles south of Prek Krabao tried unsuccessfully to relieve the post.

Both towns are on the opposite side of the river to Phnom Penh. If the rebels move closer to the capital they could be within mortar range of the city's water plant and other riverfront installations.

After the evacuation of Prek Krabao, rebels attacked the government soldiers' headquarters at Prek Luong, field reports

said. The rebels were driven off and there was no immediate report of government casualties.

Earlier, field reports said Cambodian rebels during the night attacked a disabled veterans hamlet, killing six persons and wounding 13 others.

Residents of the hamlet nine miles southwest of Phnom Penh on Highway 4 said the rebels began the attack shortly after midnight. Villagers close to the hamlet said the rebels began to withdraw after residents asked them why they were attacking invalids and children.

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VC Charge S. Viets Bomb Rang Rang ^{11/3/73}

SAIGON (AP) — The Viet Cong charged Thursday that South Vietnamese planes have repeatedly bombed Rang Rang airstrip in Communist-controlled territory 45 miles northeast of Saigon.

In a complaint filed with the peace-keeping International Commission of Control and Supervision, the Viet Cong claimed the bombing inflicted heavy damage in the area and asked the ICCS to investigate.

South Vietnamese military authorities had earlier given the ICCS notice that it intended to bomb the Rang Rang areas as

part of a training exercise between Oct. 21 and Nov. 4.

The ICCS asked Saigon for a clarification since the target area apparently was in Viet Cong territory.

A Viet Cong spokesman reported Rang Rang has not been used as an airstrip since an ICCS helicopter put down there last July to pick up two Canadian ICCS officers held prisoner by the Communists.

South Vietnamese military spokesman Lt. Col. Le Trung Hien said Thursday he had no information on the alleged bombing.