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NYT

Laird Says He Has Power To Order Incursions in Laos

WASHINGTON, July 27 (Reuters)—Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, in testimony before a House subcommittee released today, said that he felt he had authority to permit "short incursions" into Laos.

Mr. Laird's statement, made May 4 before the House subcommittee on defense appropriations, based such authority on "our protective reaction policy to prevent American casualties."

He said that he had personally authorized one incursion into Laos during a visit to Vietnam.

[The New York Times reported on May 19 that Mr. Laird had disclosed in comments the previous day before the disarmament subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that United States forces had made brief incursions into Laos on specific, limited missions.]

In the statement released today, Mr. Laird did not give the dates of any incursions.