

AGNEW SAYS U.S. WOULD ADKNOWLEDGE A LAOS DEFEAT

by James M. Naughton
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Newton, Mass., March 19 -- The Nixon Administration would admit it publicly if South Vietnamese combat forces were mauled by the enemy in Laos, Vice President Agnew said today.

"I don't see any reason why we shouldn't," he said. But the Vice President contended, in a one-hour televised background briefing with reporters and editors from the Boston area, that the South Vietnamese military thrust into Laos had been an unqualified success.

"Contrary to reports that you noticed the last day or so in the papers, this was not a rout," Mr. Agnew said. He alluded to news accounts that enemy forces had pushed Saigon's troops toward the South Vietnamese border.

"This was an orderly retreat," he said.

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