

Laird Plans Changes in Probe Policy

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Reuter

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird said yesterday that changes will be made in the military's investigative procedures following the disclosure that Gen. John D. Lavelle bombed North Vietnam in violation of presidential orders.

Laird refused to disclose the new procedures, but said they would be announced after the Senate's report on its recently completed probe of the Lavelle affair.

The Senate Armed Services Committee, which is expected to make a public report soon, voted to confirm Lavelle's superior in Vietnam, Gen. Creighton Abrams, as the new Army Chief of Staff, but voted to strip Lavelle of one of his stars for the unauthorized bombing.

Laird said also he expected the Air Force to act within several weeks on court martial charges preferred against Lavelle by Sgt. Lonnie Franks, who served under him in the Seventh Air Force Command in Saigon when the unauthorized raids took place.

Lavelle was stripped of his command in Saigon when it was discovered he had ordered Franks and others to falsify records to cover up the raids.

Laird speaking on "Face the Nation" (CBS, WTOP) said his office did not plan any further punitive actions against the general.