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THE

# Laird and Rogers, Explaining Drive, Disarm Still Skeptical Critics on Hill

### By JOHN W. FINNEY Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9—The Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense went to Capitol Hill today with the message that the incursion into Laos would insure American troop withdrawals from Vietnam and shorten the war.

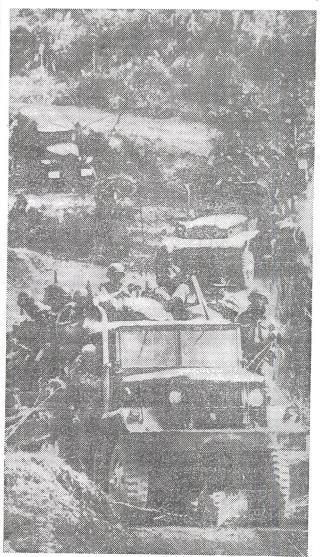
They left the Congressional Vietnam critics, while still skeptical, disarmed for the moment over the intervention. In the process they seemed to modify the previous Administration commitment that American troops would be largely removed from a combat role in Vietnam by this May.

Vietnam by this May. In a coordinated Administration campaign, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird was assigned the mission of explaining the operation to the generally friendly Senate and House Armed Services Committees. Secretary of State William P. Rogers was given the somewhat more difficult assignment of briefing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "We have not widened the war," Mr. Laird said before talvation commence outcide the

"We have not widened the war," Mr. Laird said before television cameras outside the Senate Armed Services Committee. "To the contrary, we have shortened it."

The operation in Laos, the Defense Secretary said, "will insure the success of Vietnamization and make possible the withdrawal of additional American troops." Mr. Laird predicted that the

Mr. Laird predicted that the Administration would meet or beat its goal of withdrawing 50,000 more troops by May 1, reducing the number of troops in Vietnam to 284,000. Mr. Rogers, who appeared before the cameras outside the Sen-



United Press Infernational South Vietnamese infantrymen approaching the Loatian border on Route 9 on Monday at start of the incursion.

ate Foreign Relations Committee, offered the additional Rogers said that by May 1, istration, in compliance with be out of a combat role in Vietnam by the middle of this

#### Scott Gives View

vear.

At the White House mean- cials, stems from a concern while, the Presidential press that the operation in Laos may secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, prove more prolonged and less plained by Mr. Laird, drew gensaid that 40,000 to 50,000 com-bat troops would remain in complicating the withdrawal Vietnam after the scheduled program. withdrawals were completed in April.

Mr. Ziegler did not offer a precise definition of the duties of the remaining combat troops. Other troops remaining in Viet-mam after. May 1, Mr. Ziegler said, will be artillery units and Easting and predicted that the opera-staff and commanders in the field outlined—it is on time." But after the Laird briefing infantrymen with the assign-ment of protecting American both Senator John Stennis, the six years ago." installations.

Republican leader in the Sen-ate, appeared in the press gal-lery there to explain that it would be "midsummer" before American troops were largely Senator Jackson said he ex-committee wanted that response, with several Senators describing the Laotian inter-vention as "a wise move." American troops were largely withdrawn from a combat role. Speaking on the basis of in-supplied by the White House, Senator Jackson said he ex-committee chairman, said the pected some "heavy fighting" Secretary made the point re-petedly that "the President has made very clear that the supplied by the White House, Senator Scott declared that of South Vietnamese combat while some 45 000 ground com-carability Sanator Jackson said he ex-withdrawn from a combat role. Senator Jackson said he ex-committee chairman, said the pected some "heavy fighting" Secretary made the point re-seadedly that "the President has made very clear that the Administration is acting in a south Vietnamese combat way that we consider to be in Senator Scott declared that of South Vietnamese combat way that we consider to be in while some 45,000 ground com-bat troops would remain in Vietnam after May I, it was expected that their number would be reduced to "a very bare minimum" by February or March of 1972. As recently as Jan 29 Mr

commitment, in the opinion of ran into trouble, some State Department offi-

## **Operation Schedule**

Armed Services Committee

prediction that American "we will have our troops Congressional restrictions, had troops "by and large" would largely out of the combat role." no intention of sending Ameri-The apparant Administration can ground combat troops into move to soften its previous Laos if the South Vietnamese

## Approval from Senators

The operation in Laos, as ex-Senator Stennis said that,

"undoubtedly there has been a turn of eventts for the better.'

installations. When the Rogers and Ziegler statements created some con-fusion, Senator Hugh Scott, the the South Vietnamese troops

As recently as Jan. 29, Mr. Rogers said that the Admin-frained from further criticism.