

# Pentagon Claims Laos News Slant

WASHINGTON — (AP) — A Pentagon official says news accounts of the South Vietnamese drive in Laos are focusing on defeats rather than successes.

Jerry W. Friedheim, a spokesman for the department, told newsmen yesterday, "It just seems to me that the emphasis has been on places they (South Vietnamese) have left rather than places they went."

Asked if correspondents in South Vietnam were kept fully advised of all South Vietnamese operation, Friedheim replied that reporters "have been rather thoroughly taken into conferences."

Until Thursday, American correspondents were barred from flying into Laos aboard U.S. helicopters. Some were able to hitch rides on South Vietnamese helicopters.

The ban was lifted Thursday by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird.

Friedheim alluded to stories last week that told of fierce fighting between the South Vietnamese and enemy forces in Laos and the abandonment of three base camps by the South Vietnamese.

In one battle, described by the Pentagon as a setback, more than half of the elite 450-man South Vietnamese ranger battalion was killed, wounded or captured.