

LAIRD NOW DUBIOUS ON PIPELINE DISPLAY

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WASHINGTON, March 4 — Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird acknowledged today that it "probably would have been better" if the Defense Department had made clear that a piece of pipeline shown at a Pentagon news conference had not been obtained during the current South Vietnamese operation in Laos.

Questioned by reporters after an appearance before the House Appropriations Committee, Mr. Laird at first defended the display of the three-foot length of pipeline as an example of the success of the South Vietnamese operation.

Lieut. Gen. John W. Vogt, who appeared at the news conference last week with Mr. Laird, left the impression that

the piece had been cut during the current operation. But yesterday Pentagon officials acknowledged that the piece had been obtained during an earlier unannounced South Vietnamese raid into Laos.

Asked if he thought the Pentagon had been "completely candid," Mr. Laird said that the only purpose of the demonstration had been to show "the type" of pipeline that had been cut by the South Vietnamese. But as reporters continued to press him, he finally said that in retrospect "it probably would have been better to make it clear" that the piece had not been captured recently.