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VIETNAMIZATION - Air Role

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NAME: Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense
OCCASION: Interview: WTOP TV
DATE: February 16, 1971

SCHIEFFER: As I understand it, there's no plan now to train or equip the South Vietnamese to handle this bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos once the United States stops that.

What do you do about that? Does the United States just stay there? Will we be required to stay there and bomb as long as the North Vietnamese send supplies down...?

SECRETARY LAIRD: Well, I don't know whose plans you're looking at. Our plans are to give them the very important gunship capability which is needed and necessary to interdict supplies and logistics on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

I don't know where you got your information that they weren't being prepared in this area.

But we are turning over the gunships. We also are using the A-1's and other types of aircraft that can carry on a very effective interdiction campaign as far as the South Vietnamese are concerned.

SCHIEFFER: Are you telling me that that plan is already underway?

SECRETARY LAIRD: The plan is underway to give the South Vietnamese Air Force an interdiction capability.