

# No Draft Seen for 3 Months

## Laird Cites Effect of New Pay Increases

Associated Press

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said yesterday that "we quite possibly will not be issuing any new draft calls" for the next three months.

This will hinge largely on whether more than \$3 billion in new military pay increases generate enough volunteers to fill the military manpower needs, Laird said.

"We're in a position now where we will not be having any draft calls in January," the defense chief told a news conference.

The Pentagon closed out 1971 by spacing a low 10,000-man draft quota over October, November and December. That brought the year's total calls to 98,000, lowest in nearly 10 years and about 266,000 fewer than the Vietnam war peak in 1966.

The prospects of a draft-free first quarter suggests that the Nixon administration may be able to fill its military needs in an election year with the smallest draft since before the Korean War more than 2 years ago.

The administration is committed to a maximum effort to achieve an all-volunteer force by mid-1973.

"It is too early to give you a projection for draft calls throughout calendar year 1972 . . . because of the impact of the tremendous pay increases that have been granted which amount to well over \$3 billion," Laird said.

"I am confident that these pay increases will have an effect upon retention and on recruitment," he said. "We will watch this very carefully during January, February and March."

(The Army reported that the

general trend in enlistments is up and that overall enlistments in all Army branches in September showed an increase of 10 per cent in comparison with the previous year. While statistics were not available, an Army spokesman said there has been a significant increase in the number enlisting for the combat arm—in infantry, armor and artillery.)

Laird said congressional orders to reduce the Army at a faster-than-planned rate before June 30 will also have a bearing on draft calls in the three months ahead.

He said that the Army will have to trim its forces by more than 70,000 men in order

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## Laird Says Pay Raise May Defer Draft Calls

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to get down to the congressionally mandated level of 892,000 by June 30.

Still another factor, he said, "is the progress as far as our withdrawals are concerned from Vietnam as the withdrawal program continues to go forward."

The reduction in draft calls has kept pace with the winding down of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war and with the parallel cutback in the over-all size of the armed forces.

The number of Americans in uniform stands at somewhat more than 2.5 million in all services, compared with

more than 3.5 million in 1968 before the withdrawal program was begun.

Although Laird has put great stress on high military pay as an avenue toward an all-volunteer force, many top military officers question whether such incentives are enough. They contend that the draft, even if it is cut back, is a major spur to enlistments in all the armed services.

In a minor action related to the Army's over-all scaledown, it was announced that promotions to temporary captain will be suspended for the next six months. This will delay promotion of about 1,400 first lieutenants.