

The Department of Defense announced today that Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird is building a wood-paneled meditation room in the Pentagon. The announcement said, "Secretary Laird, a regular visitor to the prayer room on Capitol Hill, strongly believed there was a similar need for a non-denominational place for meditation in the Pentagon. Accordingly, he ordered renovation of a small area." The meditation area is to be divided into two parts, one for a single individual and the other for "small groups desiring to share common concerns." The meditation area is scheduled to be completed in June at a cost of \$15,000.

The AP comments, "Religion is getting a boost from high-level defense officials these days," and quotes Admiral Thomas Moorer, who is scheduled to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as saying, "An atheist could not be as great a military leader as one who is not an atheist." The AP also quotes Secretary Laird as saying, "We adhere to the principle of separation of church and state, but this does not imply a separation of man from God."

See NYTimes, 16 Dec 70: Laird Dedicates Room For Prayer in Pentagon