

## Special New Riot Gear For Guard

### Washington

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird outlined a plan yesterday to gird National Guard riot control troops in body armor, improve their training and arm them with weapons less deadly than fast-firing combat rifles.

Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedham said the new procedures were intended to make it less likely that Guardsmen on riot duty, out of fear for their own safety or a lack of training, might fire fatal rifle shots into crowds they were trying to control.

Making public a memorandum by Laird on the project, Friedham said Congress will be asked next week to provide \$20 million to equip Guardsmen with face shields and protective jackets, lengthen their riot control training from 3 to 11 hours, and arm them with riot batons, shotguns, special rifles for use against snipers, floodlights and chemical crowd control weapons.

### RIFLE

The National Guard is in the process of converting to use of the fast-firing M-16 rifle, developed for Vietnam combat, as its standard combat weapon.

"It certainly would be our desire that there be some alternative (for riot control) to that particular weapon,"

quest to Congress is Friedheim said. "This request to Congress is an attempt to provide some alternatives to the use of that weapon."

Friedheim was asked whether this action was taken as a result of a Guard-student clash last May at Kent State University.

The May incident "obviously heightened the concern over the protection of the Guardsmen," he replied.

### KILLED

Four Kent State students plus said they feared for their lives.

A state grand jury absolved the Guardsmen of blame for the deaths, but a presidential commission called the Guards' action "unnecessary, unwarranted and inexcusable."

The Guard was suing the Mod-slower firing—M-1 weapons at that time.)

If Congress approves the request, Friedheim said, it would be the first time federal funds had been used to equip the National Guard in this way. In the past, federal aid to the Guard has been limited mostly to training, with equipment being bought out of State operating funds.

Only 20,000 of the 320,000 National Guard riot troops across the country are equipped with protective jackets because of a shortage of budgeted state funds for that purpose, he noted.

A.P. & U.P.