

P.O.W. Interviews Dismissed by Laird As Carefully Staged

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 28— Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird today called the interview of two American prisoners of war by a correspondent of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation a carefully "staged and edited" and "censored production" that left many questions unanswered.

The Christmas Day interview with two Navy pilots, at a camp on the outskirts of Hanoi, was viewed on American television last night and reported in newspapers this morning.

At a news conference, Mr. Laird criticized North Vietnam "for the cynical way" it allowed only a handful of prisoners to be seen by Western correspondents.

At the White House, Ronald L. Ziegler, President Nixon's press secretary, said the President felt the television film was in "total disregard of the terms and intentions of the Geneva convention" covering prisoners.

The prisoners, Comdr. Robert James Schweitzer and Comdr. Walter Eugene Wilber, appeared to be physically fit. They indicated that the conditions of their captivity were satisfactory and they were critical of the United States role in Vietnam.

The correspondent was allowed to see, but not interview, five other prisoners.

Mr. Laird noted that "there was no discussion, of course, of diet or medical treatment of men who might be sick or who might be wounded."

"There was no idea of how many other camps there were or what they were like or even the condition of the people that were in the rest of the camp that was shown," he continued.

By contrast, Mr. Laird said,

the International Red Cross has the right to interview any North Vietnamese or Vietcong prisoner in South Vietnam.