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37

**Laird Says Neutral Ships
Would Evacuate P.O.W.'s**

WASHINGTON, April 28 (Reuters)—Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird said today he had been assured that ships of neutral nations were available to

evacuate prisoners of both sides in the Vietnam war if Hanoi would agree to repatriation of prisoners to third countries.

Mr. Laird revived a proposal made by the United States and South Vietnam—and rejected by Hanoi—that all sick, wounded

and long-term prisoners of both sides be placed in the custody of neutral countries for the duration of the war.

He said in prepared remarks at an Air Force Association luncheon here: "I can tell you that I have been personally assured that ships flying the

flags of neutral nations would be made available for the immediate release of prisoners of war on all sides or for their internment in a neutral country."

He did not identify the countries that he said had agreed to transport prisoners.