

SF Examiner

MAR 16 1972

U.S. Asks Reds for Neutral Check on POWs

Examiner News Services

PARIS—The United States asked the Vietnamese Communists today to agree to impartial inspection of prisoner of war camps in return for a mutual understanding that there would be no further efforts made to free prisoners by raids.

The proposal was made by U.S. Ambassador William Porter at the Vietnam peace conference, the first in three weeks. The Communists gave no immediate response.

North Vietnam has banned inspection of prisoner camps, saying it fears that even neutral inspectors would give information to the United States permitting more commando raids aimed at freeing the prisoners.

A raid was conducted by the United States at Son Tay, North Vietnam, in late 1970. No prisoners were found.

Porter said the Communist forces also had attempt-

ed to free their prisoners held in South Vietnam. He asked the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong.

"Would you be prepared to accept impartial visits to prisoners in return for a firm understanding by both sides to refrain from efforts to liberate prisoners from the locations visited?"

Porter opened the session by telling the North Vietnamese their attitude toward the rights of prisoners of war is a "monumental

policy error" and added:

"Your disregard of your agreement to observe the Geneva Convention has earned you a reputation for irresponsibility and inhumanity.

"Make no mistake. On this issue you are arousing the just anger of the American people."

Porter read into the minutes of the meeting the text of Nixon's proclamation declaring March 26-April 1 "Prisoner of War Week," in

the United States in honor of the 1623 American servicemen missing in Indochina.

Speaking with newsmen before the talks, Porter said a suspicion is arising in the United States that "something very peculiar is going on" in Hanoi's POW camps because Hanoi refuses to let a neutral body inspect the prisoners.

"We're not going to let go of that one, obviously," Porter said.