

Laird Backs Aid Cut Peace Plan

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The Nixon Administration would be willing to end all economic and military aid to South Vietnam as part of a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam war, says Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird.

His comment yesterday seemed to enlarge upon the most recent conditions President Nixon outlined for negotiated agreement, but a Pentagon spokesman said Laird had pronounced nothing new.

North Vietnam has insisted upon an end to economic and military aid to the south as a condition of settlement.

In an interview with Westinghouse Broadcasting Co., Laird said that South Vietnam should receive economic aid for some time if the Administration's Vietnamization program is to succeed.

However, he went on, if negotiations bring about termination of the war in a different fashion, then we also could negotiate the question of military assistance and economic assistance at that time.

He was then asked: "If the North Vietnamese, just

as a negotiating point . . . were to insist on a cessation of all American involvement including aid, we would consider it to be a negotiable point?"

"Of course," the secretary replied.

Laird cited Nixon's proposal Jan. 25, as "the most far-reaching proposal" ever offered, but the President made no mention at that time of an end to economic aid to the south.

Laird said Nixon has made it clear on a number of occasions that such aid would be open to negotiation if insisted upon by the North Vietnamese as a condition for ending hostilities.

Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said later that everything but the issue of U.S. prisoners of war has always been open to negotiation.

If the North Vietnamese "are willing to accept limitations" on aid they receive from other nations, particularly military supplies from China and the Soviet Union, "then we might be willing to accept some limitation on what we do for the south," Friedheim said.