

Judy Miller, Pacifica, Washington:

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird accused George McGovern yesterday of what he termed "acting as an agent of Hanoi" regarding the release of American prisoners of war. ^{South Dakota} The senator, speaking in New York yesterday, accused Nixon of delaying the release of three U.S. pilots in North Vietnam for political reasons. Laird immediately issued a statement saying that, quote "It was a despicable act of a presidential candidate to make himself an ^{spokesman} ~~agent~~ for the enemy," end quote. Laird also said ^{that} McGovern apparently was willing to act as an agent for Hanoi in determining the rights of American prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention. The Defense Secretary also said ^{the North Vietnamese} ~~that~~ ^{WERE} responsible for delaying the release of the three pilots, not Nixon.

In a later appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press" Laird commended the family of one of the ^{PILOTS} prisoners for refusing to go to North Vietnam to participate in release ceremonies, and by inference criticized the two families who did go. Laird said that the Geneva Convention stipulates that prisoners of war may not be used as tools of propoganda. In response to questioning Laird implied that the two families who went to Hanoi for the September 17th release ceremonies had, thus, taken part in the violation of Geneva protocol.

[Complete.]