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**LAIRD URGES PACT
 ON VIETNAM ARMS**

**Says U.S., Soviet Union and
 China Should Agree to
 Hold Down Deliveries**

By WILLIAM BEECHER

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 —

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird called today for the negotiation of an agreement between the Soviet Union, China and the United States to hold down future deliveries of weapons to Vietnam.

This, he said, is one of the most important negotiating efforts that should follow a cease-fire.

Speaking in an impromptu farewell news conference, he voiced guarded optimism that such an understanding, implicit or explicit, could be achieved, especially with the Soviet Union, which has serious deficiencies in foodstuffs and investment capital.

Saigon Given the 'Tools'

Moscow's wish for expanded trade with the United States, he said, "is the strongest weapon that we have in our hands."

"It's much stronger than air power or anything else," he added.

Mr. Laird said that while he hoped a lasting peace would emerge from the negotiations in Paris, he would not be willing to predict an end to fighting in Indochina one, five or even 10 years from now.

The Nixon Administration, he said, has provided the Saigon Government with all the "tools" necessary to defend its territory. But he declined to say whether the United States would be willing in the future

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to employ air and sea power in Vietnam if Saigon should prove incapable of protecting itself.

"If they do not have the will and the desire to handle the security problem with the tools this President and this Congress have given them," he said, "I would agree with Senator Goldwater and Senator Stennis they would have a very, very difficult time getting further support from the United States."

Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, and Senator John C. Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, in separate statements yesterday warned the Saigon Government not to attempt an eleventh-hour move to block a cease-fire lest Congress decide to cut off further economic and military assistance.

In his news conference, held in his third-floor Pentagon office, Mr. Laird said the \$5-billion in weapons supplied to the South Vietnamese to provide for their self-defense under the Nixon Administration's Vietnamization program was considered sufficient against the present threat posed by the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong.

He said a sudden deployment of large quantities of combat aircraft and other weapons to North Vietnam might upset the balance of power, but added: "I don't think this will happen. It depends really upon China and the Soviet Union and I do not believe it is their intention to do that."

Describing it as most im-

portant that Washington negotiate with Moscow and Peking, he said the same should be done about the Middle East.

U.S. Planning Cutbacks

Asked if the United States did not plan to cut back on its air and sea power in the Indochina area after a cease-fire, Mr. Laird said there would be cutbacks but he declined to go into detail. He said the aircraft carrier *Saratoga* was returning home, but quickly added that the *Constellation* was headed out to replace her.

Other military sources said

some bombing capability would be maintained in Thailand and on aircraft carriers offshore for an extended period as a deterrent against any large-scale invasion of South Vietnam by tanks and troops from the North.

After a cease-fire, whatever its terms, Mr. Laird said, "I hope and pray there will not be any killing in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia."

"But as a practical man, I cannot assure you of that," he declared.

"I can assure you of an end to American involvement in the fighting."

The outgoing Defense Secretary said, as he has on other occasions, that his greatest disappointment on assuming office four years ago was to find there was no approved plan to provide the South Vietnamese with the weapons and training to defend their territory against the North Vietnamese. There was only a plan, he has said, to enable the South Vietnamese to defend themselves against the Vietcong within the country, with the assumption that

a settlement would be negotiated, or failing that, that the United States would continue providing for the defense against the North.

Soviet Vessel Discussed

Mr. Laird had intended to leave office tomorrow, but he said he would stay until his successor, Elliot L. Richardson, is confirmed by the Senate. Mr. Laird said he believes this would occur next Tuesday or Wednesday.

Toward the end of the news conference, Mr. Laird displayed an artist's conception of the Soviet Union's first aircraft carrier, now under construction. The vessel is more than 900 feet long, he said, with a displacement of 45,000 tons. He noted that it had an angled flight deck for use by vertical-takeoff and short-takeoff jets.

Mr. Laird said he had intended to devote his last news conference to discussing the "continuing momentum" of the Soviet weapons buildup and the need to look beyond Vietnam.

But the reporters preferred to focus on Vietnam.