

# Planes, Doctors

Associated Press

Washington

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird announced last night that flight crews and teams of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel are standing by — awaiting only a go-ahead on where and when to pick up service-

men held captive in Indochina.

Laird said, shortly after President Nixon announced that an Indochina cease-fire will go into effect Saturday, that initial flights to pick up the prisoners will begin "as soon as possible after the formal signing of the agreement in Paris."

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## Poised for POWs

The secretary said specific information would be provided "as soon as that is appropriate."

However, it is expected that the vanguard of about 587 captured American GIs will begin returning within a matter of days after the agreement is signed.

Laird also drew attention

to the other 1355 Americans listed as missing in Southeast Asia, noting: "We will also do everything possible to obtain an accounting for all the missing in action."

The procedure for the repatriation was completed months ago with only the mechanics of the actual re-

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lease awaiting terms of the cease-fire agreement.

The Pentagon had hoped to fly medical evacuation planes directly to Hanoi, but officials believe North Vietnam is unlikely to go along with this. Instead, it appears the men will be flown from Hanoi aboard Communist aircraft to Vientiane, Laos.

### PROCESSING

They will be loaded aboard Air Force C-141 transports now standing by in the Western Pacific and shuttled to Clark Field in the Philippines, the primary processing station. In the event of a mass release, some would be flown to U.S. bases on Okinawa and Guam.

New uniforms, tailored to account for expected weight loss and stitched with decorations and rank insignia earned while in prison, await each man at Clark Field.

Also awaiting the men at Clark are toilet kits and "personnel information brochures" with photographs and letters from their families and lists of back pay allowances and leave time accrued while in captivity. To

bring them up to date on the events of the past seven years they will be given a 219-page synopsis of news stories.

Physicians and psychiatrists will examine them, and intelligence officers question them on prison life and any knowledge they may have of their comrades still in captivity.

Operation Homecoming anticipates that some of the men, because of their long periods in captivity may face long periods of adjustment. Their wives have been warned that their husbands may have such problems as temporary impotence, depression and a tendency to have accidents.

Once cleared by the doctors at Clark, the men will be sent to Travis Air Force Base in California from which they will fan out to more than 30 military hospitals closest to their homes.

The family reunion will take place as soon as possible after the arrival at the local hospitals. For those unable to make the long trip home from Clark, families of these men will be flown at government expense to the Philippines and a reunion there.