

Gen. Gavin Calls for Cut In U.S. Force in Europe

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Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin, who commanded the U.S. Seventh Army in Europe in the 1950s, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday it was time to cut the U.S. NATO ground commitment from five divisions to two.

"I can't for the life of me see why we need to keep such a force there," the retired General told Sen. Frank Carlson (R-Kan.). With three additional armored cavalry regiments and the "Berlin Brigade," the Seventh Army is actually considered the equivalent of six divisions rather than five.

Gavin said he felt that Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara was in agreement with him on the need for the United States to show leadership in this matter. But he cautioned that this reduction

should be worked out in close cooperation with the British and West Germans and made "a matter of record" in the NATO treaty.

It was the first time Gavin had specified the size of the cut he had in mind to reduce a force that he said is "far in excess of today's needs." His call echoed the drive by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) for a "substantial" cut.

The onetime Ambassador to France also said the "one major critical event" in Asia, the revolution in Communist China, has given the United States an unprecedented chance to deal effectively with President Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam.

"He's his own man now—he's not a satellite of China—we can talk with him in his own terms," he told Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), who had asked him about this point in his prepared statement.

"I believe that we can negotiate with Hanoi and with the National Liberation Front," he said in his statement, "confident that a free, neutral and independent Vietnam can be established, with guarantees of stability from an international body."

"That would be the best thing that could happen to us," Gavin answered when Gore asked if a neutral Vietnam might emerge. He said that 20 years ago the United States considered a neutral nation to be an enemy, but that things had changed since then.

He also called for a halt in the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam without "any stipulation" of what the Communists might do in return. But while he urged an early settlement of the Vietnamese war, he said that situation was not comparable with the one in Thailand.