

European Troop Pullout Discussed

By Drew Pearson and
Jack Anderson

One of the most important policy decisions affecting both American defenses and better relations with the Soviet has been under discussion among President Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Out of it has come a plan to approach Moscow for an arms control agreement that would go far beyond the recent treaty to neutralize space and the expected treaty to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. What the President is aiming at is a U.S.-U.S.S.R. pact which would permit us to stop building costly military missiles and even start withdrawing our troops from Europe.

This cautious optimism is not shared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who instead want to beef up our missile defenses. They are worried over the photos taken from U.S. observer satellites of over 300 more ICBM launching sites around the chief Soviet cities.

Naturally the President has studied these photos too. However, he is impressed with McNamara's logic and cold facts and his ability to run circles around his generals and admirals in knowing the exact strength of the United States vs. Russia. McNamara has argued that we are still far ahead of the Soviet, and that if we respond to the current Soviet defense increase of 8.2 per cent it will lead to

a leapfrog race without end.

We can report that the President has now agreed to hold the present defense line and the Kremlin in turn has taken note of the gesture. Soviet leaders have indicated an interest in halting, perhaps even reversing, the arms race.

Exit U.S. Troops

Meanwhile, pressure has been building up inside the Johnson Administration to withdraw all but a token ground force from Europe. Opponents of such a move have warned that this would cripple NATO; they cite an intelligence estimate that NATO forces could hold off a full-scale Soviet ground attack only three days anyway without resorting to nuclear weapons.

However, here is the argument used by those who favor the curtailment of U.S. troops:

Massive manpower isn't necessary to handle the "nukes," as our battlefield nuclear weapons are called. The United States possesses literally tens of thousands of nukes, a large percentage of them in Europe.

Even the smallest, which can be fired from a Jeep-mounted recoilless rifle, packs a punch many times greater than the biggest blockbuster dropped by our bombers on Germany during World War II.

The biggest of our blockbusters contained a mere two tons of TNT. In contrast, a

small, one-kiloton nuclear projectile has the power of 1000 tons of TNT.

It was a 20-kiloton bomb that wiped out Hiroshima, crushing its downtown buildings like eggshells and killing thousands. A mere half-kiloton burst would destroy an enemy tank force or a couple of regiments of infantry if they were packed in a small area. The radioactive fallout—the death dust spread by every nuclear explosion—would cause casualties over a far wider area.

Smallest nuke in the Army's arsenal is the Davy Crockett, a bulbous 279mm. projectile launched from a jeep. Its exact power is a military secret, except that it is in the sub-kiloton range (less than 1000 tons of TNT). By using adapter pistons, a squad can fire it from either a 120mm. or 155mm. recoilless rifle.

Roll Call of Nikes

Next in size are nuclear shells for the six-inch and eight-inch howitzers, which are mounted on their own tank-like tracked vehicles. The force of these shells range from sub-kiloton to several kilotons.

Two military rockets, the Little John and Honest John, also have nuclear warheads in the kiloton range. The Little John is fired from a truck-towed launcher small enough to be loaded in a cargo plane and landed with paratroops.

The Honest John, nearly 25 feet long with a weight of 4500 pounds, is too heavy for air delivery. It has been largely replaced with an equally powerful but more handy weapon, the Lance.

Next come the guided missiles, which can deliver a nuclear wallop anywhere from 10 to 1000 miles.

The Air Force also has a variety of small nuclear bombs for battlefield use. Their size and weight are tailored to fit the fighter-bombers that carry them. Some fit in bomb bays, others are slung under the wings of supersonic fighters and look like extra gas tanks.

Some of these small nuclear packages are designed for toss bombing, others are fitted with delayed action devices. The deadly seeds they sow don't sprout into nuclear mushrooms until after the ground-hugging delivery planes have sped safely away.

The Navy's carrier planes pack similar bombs, and the Marine Corps carries some of the Army's nuclear weapons.

With weapons like these, the argument goes, it is no longer necessary to keep numbers of men in Europe to discourage Soviet aggression. Meanwhile, the most serious initiative since the nuclear test-ban treaty has been taken to achieve the peace on earth and good will toward men that the Christmas carolers are singing about.