

# U.S. 'Concerned' Over NATO Costs

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PARIS, July 25—The United States is deeply concerned about "imbalances and inequi-

ties" in sharing NATO costs, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said today.

The statement, made at a meeting of NATO defense ministers, was taken to mean that other members of the alliance should pay a larger share of its costs.

The meeting was attended by the defense ministers of all 15 NATO members except Iceland, which has no defense minister. Its purpose was to plan NATO policy for the next five years.

The presence of French Minister of the Armies Pierre Messmer was greeted by some as a token that France remains a faithful ally despite her withdrawal from the NATO command structure. France is still a member of the alliance itself.

Others remarked that since NATO decisions must be taken unanimously, France's presence means that a potential veto is always at hand in case the other members move towards actions unwelcome to this country.

McNamara did not make any specific suggestions about who should raise the ante, but some thought first of Britain, which has just notified West Germany that it is going to be obliged to pull some of its NATO forces in that country

unless Bonn will pay the cost of keeping them there.

British Defense Minister Denis Healey argued that Britain's financial situation is such that it cannot continue to support the drain represented by the troops in Germany. He also pointed out that Britain is already spending, and until 1970 will continue to spend, a larger proportion of its Gross National Product on NATO defense than "most" of its allies.

He could have added "all but one." At present, Britain's contribution of 6.9 per cent of its GNP is surpassed only by the 8.8 per cent contribution of the United States. France is third with 6.7 per cent, but a question mark must be placed against this figure for the future because France's half-in-half-out status presumably will affect her financial participation in NATO as well as her military participation.

West Germany, which spends 5.5 per cent of its GNP on NATO, is under fire not only from the British on financing troops but from the United States. Bonn has been telling Washington that it cannot absorb any more arms because its troops are already fully equipped.

McNamara might have had that point in mind when he pointed out the advantages of modernization. Germany could increase her purchases from the United States by buying more up-to-date weapons.

But McNamara's chief reason for raising the modernization issue seems to have been to scotch rumors about possible further withdrawals of American forces from Europe because of manpower demands in Vietnam. He got that point across to some observers. The financial newspaper *L'Information* headlined its story tonight: "McNamara gives assurances that U.S.

does not intend to reduce European effectiveness."

This, however, is not quite what he said. He said that the United States does not want to see any reduction of "military capability" in Europe. But he pointed out that military capability is not necessarily measured solely by the number of troops in hand. Thus, fewer men with better equipment could represent an equal military capability.

McNamara showed awareness of the view held widely in NATO that the danger from the Soviet Union has now become virtually non-existent, so that paying more for NATO makes little sense. Some Americans agree with this view, but they also think that the Europeans are ignoring the possibility that the situation may change.

"We believe a threat remains," McNamara said, "and we believe we should meet it with an ever stronger NATO."