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Schlesinger Affirms U.S. Vow To Honor Defense Obligations

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Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger reasserted tonight that the United States has prepared to fulfill its defense obligations in Asia and Europe.

"It will be understood by all nations, East and West," he said in a speech prepared for delivery at the Overseas Press Club Awards dinner. "that an attack upon our forces supporting the alliances will immediately bring to bear the full weight of American military power."

The Secretary of Defense cited mutual defense agreements with Japan and South Korea and the North Atlantic Treaty as the alliances he had in mind. These treaty obligations, he said, remain "the highest law of the land."

Mr. Schlesinger's comments reflected the belief of high military and civilian authorities in the Defense Department that in view of the possible defeat of South Vietnam by North Vietnam some verbal assurance should be extended to allies elsewhere.

Some military sources suggest that, if South Vietnam is defeated, action might be taken, on a temporary basis, to reassure allies, especially those in East Asia who doubt the strength of military ties. This could take the form of a deployment of the Seventh Fleet northward to Japanese waters or a visit by a senior Government official to United States troops in South Korea.

Mr. Schlesinger specifically rejected President John F. Kennedy's blanket offer of support for other nations.

"Tell them in other lands," he said, "not that the United States is prepared to go anywhere or to pay any price in supporting others, but that the United States will continue to play its proper role in the support of other nations, when those countries effectively demonstrate both a will and a capacity for self-help."

This was interpreted as a statement of the American defense position first enunciated by President Richard M. Nixon at Guam in 1969.

The Defense Secretary said that hopes for success in the détente policy with the Soviet Union, established by Mr. Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger, depend upon restraint by the other side.

North Vietnam's invasion of the South, he said, is an "object

lesson regarding how much restraint on the actions of at least one Communist state such pledged treaty obligations have when the force balance becomes unfavorable."

He said he was referring to Hanoi's "flagrant violations" of the Paris accords.

The action also illustrates, the Secretary of Defense said, "how our valid hopes for détente" depend directly "upon the retention of an underlying equilibrium of force in the areas of vital importance to the free nations of the world."

Much of Mr. Schlesinger's speech was devoted to what seemed to be a history lesson for listeners overseas. He traced the oscillations of American feeling about overseas involvement from the Spanish-American War until the present, pointing out that public opinion had swung from enthusiastic physical participation in world affairs to such "high-flown moral" commitments as the Kellogg-Briand pact of the twenties.

This "admixture of idealism and disenchantment," he said, has led to a search for novel foreign policies. But he said there were only two broad lines of policy.

"Given the underlying realities of the single strategic stage on which world politics is now played," he said, "the United States will be obliged either to support its more or less permanent interests or withdraw into the North American continent."

Voice of America Omitting 'Speculation' on Evacuation

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 15 — The White House press secretary, Ron Nessen, said today that "speculation" about the evacuation of United States citizens from South Vietnam could endanger their lives and confirmed that the Voice of America had been ordered to refrain from any mention of such statements in its broadcasts.

He told reporters at a news briefing that the order to the Government's overseas radio system was "not censorship but responsibility."

"There are occasions, such as now, when we must operate under some constraints," he said.