

FORD AD

U.S. Backs Tactical Atom Arms Against a Soviet Push in Europe

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NYTimes By BERNARD GWERTZMAN
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WASHINGTON, May 29—Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger has told Congress that a conventional Soviet-led attack against Western Europe may force the United States to use battlefield nuclear weapons to avoid defeat.

In an explicit statement of American readiness to use nuclear weapons against conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact, Mr. Schlesinger said efforts should be made to insure that an atomic retaliation was defensive to reduce the risk of the conflict's growing into all-out nuclear war.

"However, the attack should be delivered with sufficient shock and decisiveness to forcibly change the perceptions of

Warsaw Pact leaders and create a situation conducive to negotiations," he said.

Mr. Schlesinger made his comment in a report submitted to Congress a few weeks ago on "The theater Nuclear force posture in Europe." He was required to submit such a report as part of last year's defense budget legislation. An unclassified version of the study was made available today.

There are basically three types of military forces assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact forces: strategic, or long-range, nuclear forces; theater or battlefield nuclear forces; and conventional non-nuclear forces.

During the period of unques-

Does she or doesn't he? Only "The Angel" knows for sure.—The Blue Angel. Advt.

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U.S. Backs Use of Tactical Atom Arms

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tioned American nuclear superiority, strategy was based on deterrence through "the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons in lieu of large conventional forces," Mr. Schlesinger said.

In 1967, this policy changed to one of "flexible response," using a combination of conventional and nuclear forces, he noted.

Second Policy Change

Because the Soviet Union has now achieved parity with the United States in strategic forces, he said, greater emphasis must fall on conventional forces and theater nuclear forces.

The report said there were 7,000 American nuclear warheads in Western Europe, with two-thirds consigned to use by allied forces in case of war and one-third to American forces. All the warheads are under United States control until turned over for allied use.

Most defense analysts believe that the North Atlantic and Warsaw Pact conventional

forces are roughly equal, with the communist forces possessing numerical advantages in men, tanks and aircraft, and the Western forces superior in quality of tanks and planes.

In discussing the possible use of battlefield nuclear forces, Mr. Schlesinger said a primary purpose of the weapons was to deter the Warsaw Pact from either a conventional or a battlefield nuclear attack. One report credits the Warsaw Pact with 3,500 nuclear warheads.

Worst Case Envisaged

Mr. Schlesinger said that, although North Atlantic conventional forces were supposed to be able to hold their own with the Warsaw Pact, "it is possible to envision significantly worse circumstances than those planning assumptions, in which NATO conventional forces are unable to hold under conventional attack."

"Consequently, such a contingency makes it impossible to rule out NATO first use of theater nuclear forces," he said.

"The first use of theater nuclear forces, even in very limited ways, carries grave risks

of escalation and should be considered only when the consequences of conventional defeat would be even more serious," he continued. "If the alternative is, for example, major loss of NATO territory or forces, NATO political leaders may choose to accept the risks of first use."

Mr. Schlesinger said that studies had been under way on the possibility of reducing the number of nuclear warheads in Europe, but noted that their presence was considered vital to the allies.

The possible first use of theater nuclear weapons has been discussed before, especially in recent posture statements by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

An area touched upon by Mr. Schlesinger, but not amplified, is the probable Soviet response to a use of nuclear weapons. He said current Warsaw Pact strategy was oriented to the offensive, and forces are trained in "nuclear operations."

"The Soviets apparently see escalation of war in Europe to nuclear conflict as likely," he said.