

Longer column
filled Nuclear
Weapons.

U.S. Ready With Nuclear Weapons

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THE ARMED FORCES are prepared to use tactical nuclear weapons if President Ford should call for them, not only to repel aggression but also to respond to "minor incidents."

In public, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger has emphasized that any use of nuclear weapons would be an "agonizing decision," which would be made only in the event of "major hostilities."

But competent sources insist that the President has been given the additional "option" of using tactical nukes in a minor crisis. The new policy is intended to increase his flexibility.

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IF IT HAD been impossible to recapture the Mayaguez and rescue the crew, for example, the President could have threatened a limited nuclear blow to obtain the ship's release.

This doesn't mean, of course, that the President would ever resort to such a chilling threat. But our sources point out that President Ford is less in awe of nuclear weapons than any man who has occupied the White House since Harry Truman.

Once a nuclear threat is made, the policymakers fully understand that the United States must be prepared to carry it out: The armed forces, for their part, are ready. The Strategic Air Command began briefing missile and bomber wings months ago on the new Nuclear Weapons

Employment Policy, or NUWEP as missilemen call it.

During these briefings, the possible use of nuclear weapons in a "minor crisis" was specifically discussed. It is possible to hit extremely small targets with low-yield weapons. An oil refinery or industrial complex, for example, could be leveled in one swift nuclear strike without doing serious damage to the nearby population.

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HERE IS a hypothetical scenario, which was presented at the briefings:

A crisis develops. Diplomatic approaches are made to settle it, but the peaceful efforts fail. Then the President has the option of brandishing his nuclear weapons.

He could set forth his demands, issue the nuclear ultimatum and set a deadline. If the demands were not met within the time period, he could order a tactical nuclear strike.

The appropriate missile or bomber wing would receive a "LNO package," containing their instructions. This means Limited Nuclear Option.

Once the President gave the green light, the nuclear blow would be delivered. In preparation for this possibility, missile and bomber crews are now practicing dozens of complicated new missions. The training is supposed to be completed by January 1.