

SFChronicle
U.S. Policy
JUL 2 1975
On Using
A-Weapons

Longer story, WXPost, same date, filed Ford Ad.

Washington

Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger said yesterday the United States might make first use of strategic nuclear weapons against selected targets in Russia, but "it is a very low probability."

"Under no circumstances could we disavow the first use of nuclear weapons," Schlesinger told a group of newsmen in reaffirming long-standing U.S. policy.

The defense secretary attempted to clear away the confusion that has arisen over U.S. policy on nuclear weapons.

Some congressmen and others have been under the impression that the United States renounced long ago any first use of strategic weapons, such as long-range missiles aimed at the Soviet Union and shorter-range tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and South Korea.

The confusion apparently arises from a lack of distinction between "first use" of nuclear weapons on a limited scale and a massive "first strike" that could disarm an opponent.

Schlesinger said that with the awesome nuclear weapons power on both sides, "there is no possibility of a disarming first strike."

"We cannot obtain it, the Soviets cannot obtain it for the foreseeable future," he said. He added that the United States does not wish to develop such an ability and opposes the Russians developing such power.

Schlesinger indicated, as he has before, that he is concerned the Russians could be heading in the direction of a first strike with a new generation of huge missiles armed with multiple warheads. Soviet military doctrine, he said, has "no inhibitions whatsoever" against launching a disarming first strike against the United States.

At the same time, Schlesinger said, the U.S. policy not to achieve a disarming first strike "does not mean that we will declare against the first use of strategic weapons."

"We are pledged as we have been for many years to deterrence and defense of Western Europe and we are prepared, should the need arise, to use those weapons in that way," Schlesinger said.

Associated Press