

Alert still in effect for some U.S. units

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon sharply reduced the alert of U.S. military forces today.

It returned most of the 1.7 million personnel stationed in the United States and the Pacific to normal duty after nearly three days at the ready because of concern that the Russians might send troops to enforce the Middle East cease-fire.

Officials said the Army's crack 82d Airborne Division remains on alert at Ft. Bragg, N.C.

Also kept on alert were some 320,000 U.S. troops in Europe and about 80,000 under the Atlantic Command, including major naval elements.

Officials said the alert, ordered early Thursday, was not being ended entirely because the United States is not yet certain that about 50,000 Soviet paratroopers have been taken off alert.

There were indications that some U.S. military units will stay on alert into tomorrow, even though the U.S.-Soviet crisis over the Middle East appears over.

The status of the 50,000 Soviet paratroopers holds the key to the pace at which the United States unravels the alert.

Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger told newsmen yesterday that an alert of those airborne troops principally inside Russia, plus some other military

and diplomatic indicators, caused the United States to place all of its forces at the ready.

Schlesinger said, "we are carefully watching" for evidence that the Russians have ended their alert, but that "it is easier to determine when forces have been put on the alert than when that alert status has been terminated."