

Impeachment Politics May Cost Nitze Pentagon Post

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WASHINGTON, March 21—Six weeks ago it appeared all but certain that Paul H. Nitze, a former Deputy Secretary of Defense, would be appointed to a high Pentagon post. Now it appears that Mr. Nitze has become a casualty of impeachment politics.

Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger's personal recommendation that Mr. Nitze be made Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs was submitted to the White House in late January. Thus far, the White House has not sent the nomination to the Senate, and there is growing doubt in Pentagon circles that it will.

The White House delay on the nomination does not stem from any personal objections to Mr. Nitze, whom the Nixon Administration has previously endorsed by making him a senior member of the United States delegation to the strategic arms talks with the Soviet Union. Rather, the delay, according to officials, grows out of a White House concern to preserve a one-third minority in the Senate that could block the conviction of President Nixon if he is impeached by the House.

Gesture to Goldwater

Maintaining that blocking minority depends upon keeping the Senate conservatives in line behind the President. One of the key conservatives, particularly now that Senator James L. Buckley, Conservative-Republican of New York, has jumped the traces and demanded the resignation of Mr. Nixon, is Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona.

The first indication that the Nitze nomination was running onto the shoals of impeachment politics came about three weeks ago when Senator Goldwater issued a statement saying he was "unalterably opposed" to Mr. Nitze, whom he identified with "a group interested in bringing about our unilateral disarmament."

In retrospect, Defense officials acknowledged that Mr. Schlesinger probably miscalculated in not first checking out the Nitze nomination with Senator Goldwater, but they also point out that impeachment



Camera Press

Paul H. Nitze

the political price it would have to pay would be the potential alienation of Senator Goldwater and some of his conservative colleague on the impeachment issue. As analyzed by White House officials, Senator Goldwater is so strongly opposed to Mr. Nitze that he could well switch on the impeachment issue if the White House insisted on proceeding with the nomination.

The difficulties with the Nitze nomination are cited by some high-ranking officials as an example of how the Watergate affair has circumscribed the Administration's political latitude on Capitol Hill and, in turn, enhanced the bargaining power of the conservatives.

Mr. Schlesinger, for example, finds himself caught in this political bind as he attempts to defend his defense budget in Congress.

Mr. Schlesinger, according to

associates, still wants Mr. Nitze, who he feels would revitalize the Pentagon's "little State Department" and take some of the burden of international policy issues off his shoulders.

But Mr. Schlesinger has his own problems defending his budget and, according to associates, does not want to expend too much political capital on the Nitze nomination, particularly if it means alienating the conservatives who form the hard core of support for the Pentagon.

At the same time, the conservatives have found that they can increase their demands on the Pentagon. One political straw in the wind was the way Senator Goldwater hinted this week that he might oppose an increase in military aid to South Vietnam, which the Pentagon has insisted is urgently needed.

politics was far removed from the Defense Secretary's mind when he proposed that Mr. Nitze be head of what is known as the Pentagon's "little State Department."

But after the Goldwater statement, according to officials, the implications of the Nitze nomination on the impeachment proceedings were raised by the White House, in particular by Bryce N. Harlow, a Presidential counselor who is coordinating the White House's Congressional strategy during the Watergate affair.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Goldwater probably does not command the votes to block the Nitze nomination. If the White House wanted, therefore, it could probably push the nomination through.

But, according to officials, the White House calculates that