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# NIXON IS WEIGHING OPTIONS ON TOXINS

## Receives Report Giving Him Three Choices on Agents in U.S. Military Arsenal

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25 —

President Nixon has just received an interagency report proposing three choices on whether the United States should retain highly poisonous toxins in its chemical-biological arsenal.

Among the three choices is a proposal that toxins be given up entirely. The President, who asked for the report, is expected to make a decision on the issue within the next two weeks.

According to reliable sources, the 30-page paper was compiled among the various agencies of Government, including the Defense and State Departments, over the last month and was just submitted to the National Security Council.

At almost the same time, the White House received an inter-agency paper making recommendations on how the Administration should submit the Geneva Protocol of 1925 for Senate ratification. The Pentagon and the State Departments are divided on how this should be done.

The protocol prohibits the first use of gas or germs in war.

President Nixon decided in November that the United States would renounce all weapons of germ warfare. Toxins—the dead but poisonous products of bacteria — were not mentioned. While most experts class toxins as chemical, rather than biological agents, toxins cannot be produced without first producing bacteria.

The President announced that

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the United States would support a British treaty banning the use, production and stockpiling of germs for war. The British have interpreted their treaty, in effect, banning the production of toxins.

The three choices that will be placed before the President

1. Keeping open entirely the option to produce and use toxins.
2. Not producing toxins now, but keeping open the possibility of producing them if a method is discovered of making them synthetically that is, without bacteria.
3. Giving up toxins entirely and working only on offensive measures against them — such as more effective gas masks.

Toxins can produce such diseases as botulism, diphtheria, staphylococcus food poisoning and typhoid.

A germ and a toxin differ in that the toxin does not multiply in the human body and it is not contagious.

This means that toxins must

be dispersed like chemical agents, so that they reach each person they infect. It also makes them more practical weapons than germs; there is no danger that they will spread through contagion into neutral or friendly areas.

Some State Department officials have made clear in private conversations their belief that if the Army is allowed to produce toxins the United States will lose both the practical and propaganda advantages it has reaped in the wake of the President's announcement in November.

In the interagency discussions that led to the paper on toxins, the Defense Department acknowledged that it had a supply of poison bullets stockpiled at Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas. The bullets contain botulinum toxin.

### Prestige Loss Feared

However, the Defense Department told the representatives of the other agencies that the bullets had lost their potency and would be destroyed.

The President will also have

to settle the disagreement between the Pentagon and the State Department concerning the submission of the Geneva Protocol to the Senate.

Mr. Nixon said the United States would "renounce the use of lethal biological agents and weapons and all other methods of biological warfare." That renunciation goes beyond the protocol; it means the United States would not "retaliate in kind" with weapons of germ warfare.

The Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff favor an informal understanding on the part of the United States or even an explicit reservation to the treaty to the effect that if another nation uses germs in war, the United States would no longer consider itself bound not to use the germs.

Several nations have made such a reservation when they became parties to the Geneva Protocol, but the State Department is against the United States' doing so. It argues that this sort of reservation would undercut the President's decision and reflect badly on the United States.

There is also a question within the executive branch on how to go about submitting the Geneva Protocol to the Senate for ratification.

The Administration made it clear in November that it did not interpret the protocol's ban on chemical weapons to include the teargas and herbicides that the United States is using in Vietnam.

The question is whether the Administration should present the treaty to the Senate with an explicit reservation exempting teargas and herbicides or whether the Administration should just present the treaty, explain its interpretation and let it go at that.

There are those who believe the Administration might be in trouble if the Senate were asked to vote on the treaty and a separate reservation to it.

Some of those in the inter-agency discussions reportedly also believed that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee might turn a debate on a treaty-with-reservation into a wider discussion of the Vietnam war.

The Committee chairman is Senator J. W. Fulbright, an Arkansas Democrat who is one of the leading Congressional opponents of the war.

The Administration is also trying to settle on a method at Pine Bluff Arsenal. Part of the problem apparently, is how to get rid of the germs in a way that would convince other countries that the United States has actually betrayed them.

Another problem for the Ad-

ministration is what to do with the arsenal at Pine Bluff, now that it has pledged itself to stop producing and stockpiling germs.

There has been some discussion of turning it over to the Agriculture Department or the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. No decision is expected on this, however, for a month or more.