

Head of Joint Chiefs Authorized to Act Alone in Emergencies

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 16—The Defense Department issued a new directive today aimed at improving the nation's worldwide command communications system and making it more responsible in fast-breaking crisis situations.

Among other things, the new order authorizes the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to operate in place of the five chiefs in emergencies when time might make it difficult to convene the traditional military advisory body.

This would include either the start of nuclear war or a more conventional crises, such as the sudden entry a year ago of Syrian tanks into Jordan.

An earlier draft of the directives had raised the concern of some of the Joint Chiefs who feared they would be displaced, in emergencies, from their role of advising the President and Defense Secretary on what military force might be employed, and in translating general instructions into specific orders to commanders in the field.

But one senior general today said that the Joint Chiefs had been assured they would continue their advisory role as before under the new system.

"Our only concern," another general commented, "is that some future J.C.S. chairman might construe the 'time-sensitive' authority in the directive to shunt the other chiefs

aside. We have no such worry under the present chairman, Adm. Thomas H. Moorer."

The draft of the new command communications setup was one of the last major projects of David Packard, who stepped down Monday as Deputy Secretary of Defense.

He and other administration officials had been concerned both about technical and substantive inadequacies in the so-called command and control system.

There had been too many instances, they believed, when information on such things as the capture of the spy ship Pueblo was delayed in getting to top national leaders, and when the Joint Chiefs of Staff proved cumbersome in dealing with a crisis, such as the United States' response to the shooting down of an EC-121 electronics eavesdropping plane by North Korea in 1969.

Staff Role Stressed

In the summer of 1970 a special blue ribbon defense panel, after long study, recommended that a "single senior military officer" displace the Joint Chiefs as the sole link in the chain of command between the Defense Secretary and the commanders in the field.

The new directive makes a point of keeping the five-man staff in the chain of command, except in case of nuclear war or "other time-sensitive operations" where the chairman acts in their stead.

The chairman is given

authority, in addition, to revamp the current global communications system, to give clear priority to informing national leaders of major incidents around the world and

transmitting their orders to the field.

Separate communications systems maintained by each of the services and by specific commands, such as the Strategic Air Command, must become better integrated into the Presidential decision-making network, according to the directive, relegating to second place their other needs.