

Risk of Nuclear War in Korea Hinted

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

Defense Secretary James Schlesinger has been trying to send a message to Pyongyang. He wants to put North Korea's Premier Kim Il-sung on notice, according to competent sources, that Kim may risk nuclear retaliation if he attempts to revive the Korean War.

Schlesinger has placed increased emphasis lately on limited nuclear warfare as a military option. In the backrooms of the Pentagon, he has suggested striking North Korean targets with tactical nuclear weapons if the Communist forces attempt to cross the 38th Parallel.

Schlesinger would like to get this word to the recklessly ambitious Kim who for months has been tunneling under the demilitarized zone and has now deployed armored forces for a possible offensive.

Schlesinger has issued public warnings of a direct attack upon North Korean military forces if a conflict should flare up. He has been careful, however, not to mention nuclear retaliation in public.

The cautious warnings have had the approval of President Ford, who hoped to deter Pyongyang without alarming Peking and Moscow. The President has taken pains also not to stir up Congress. He has given private assurances to congressional leaders that he will not order U.S. forces into combat in Korea without formal congressional approval.

Meanwhile, Schlesinger has pushed the development of mobile nuclear weapons as the best defense against future Ko-

reas and Vietnams. The Strategic Air Command has sent top-secret briefing teams to explain the new nuclear policy to bomber crews and missile wings. In military shorthand, the secret briefings are called NUWEP, which means Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy.

This is more a change of emphasis than a change of policy. The Limited Nuclear Option, or LNO in military parlance, has been available to the President since the early 1960s. Throughout the Vietnam War, for example, the possibility always existed that nuclear weapons might have been used against selected targets in Vietnam.

We have established that some U.S. planes actually flew combat missions with tactical nuclear weapons. Competent sources told us that in the mid-1960s an F-102 pilot fired a nuclear missile by accident against some North Vietnamese gunboats in Haiphong Bay. The error reportedly was caused by a crossed wire in the firing safety mechanism.

We did our best to check out the incident but were never able to confirm it. Although we were given the name of the pilot who allegedly misfired the nuke, we were never able to track him down.

Our allies, meanwhile, are apprehensive over Schlesinger's new emphasis on limited nuclear warfare. The controversy is summarized in a confidential NATO document in our possession.

"Nuclear attack would be met by whatever scale of launch the circumstances demanded, including, for example, a precision strike against Soviet mili-

tary targets," states the document.

"Supporters of this change claim that it gives the U.S. President greater flexibility in decision making; that it adds to the credibility of the nuclear guarantee to Europe; and it informs the USSR that United States is prepared to continue the arms race if necessary.

"Critics, however, maintain that in making the use of nuclear weapons more feasible, it increases the possibility of a nuclear war; also it is destabilizing, in that the USSR could interpret it as a move towards a first strike capability."

Wild Flight—Two senior Senate staff members had themselves a boisterous time on a recent flight to London.

The rampageous pair, Robert Vastine and Paul Leventhal, both members of the Senate Government Operations Committee staff, booked first-class passage, although they were supposed to travel by coach as an economy measure.

They had scarcely settled in their plush seats, according to witnesses, when they were served champagne. The two Senate employees quickly polished off a bottle of Moet, along with shrimp cocktail, and other hors d'oeuvres.

Later Vastine asked for red wine to wash down his main course. When the stewardess informed him there was nothing but Bordeaux on board, he began hollering about the terrible service.

Nonetheless, the Senate staffers downed two full bottles of Bordeaux, which Vastine grabbed from the stewardess' hand. He also ate three portions of

roast beef, followed by a double portion of ice cream.

Yet he raised such a howl about the poor service that a stewardess rushed from the first-class cabin in tears. And at the end of the flight, an internal Pan Am teletype quoted both the captain and purser as reporting "two first class passengers, Vastine and Leventhal, extremely abusive and caused embarrassment to remaining first class passengers."

Vastine and Leventhal confirmed that Vastine had been vociferous but not vulgar in his criticism of the service. "I was irritated," said Vastine. "One shouldn't lose one's temper, but I did." He said the crew was "very disorganized," the food "was kind of thrown at us" and "not one profane word crossed my lips."

This was disputed by other witnesses. A Pan Am spokesman said the company would make "no comment" on the incident.

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