

Schlesinger

SFChronicle

NOV 24 1975

On Why He

Was Fired

Washington

James Schlesinger said yesterday that before his dismissal as defense secretary, the White House was proposing a defense budget for next year that would have required a 200,000-man reduction in the size of the armed forces.

In his first public appearance since his forced resignation, Schlesinger made clear that he believed his objections to White House attempts to restrict the growth in the defense budget were the "chief substantive issue" that led to his dismissal by President Ford.

On the Saturday before his dismissal three weeks ago, Schlesinger presented his objections to the proposed defense budget to Mr. Ford and warned that it would require what he regarded as an unacceptable cut in military manpower.

Schlesinger, appearing on the NBC television program "Meet the Press," said that for the fiscal year that begins next October 1 the White House had been proposing a \$97 billion defense budget. That would represent a \$7 billion reduction from the spending level that the administration had projected for the Defense Department.

The proposed defense budget, he said, would have forced a 200,000 man reduction, starting as early as next February, in the 2.1

Back Page Col. 4

SCHLESINGER

From Page 1

million-man military force, which he said already had been reduced "to the minimal point."

While the new fiscal year begins next October 1, the Defense Department would need more than one year's time to implement the proposed spending cuts, and thus the department would have to begin reducing forces as early as February.

"A shrinkage of the force structure of that sort is not consistent with maintaining a military balance in a period of time in which the Soviets have expanded in every conceivable area," Schlesinger said.

The Soviet Union, he noted, now has more than four million men under arms, while the United States has reduced its military manpower, which totaled 3.5 million at the height of the Vietnam war, to the lowest point since before the Korean war.

Since the Schlesinger dismissal, there are indications the White House has relented somewhat in its attempt to hold down next year's defense budget as part of the President's program to reduce the projected federal budget by \$28 billion.

Schlesinger said, however, that he still thinks that "inevitably, unless there is an alteration in the present plan," the administration would make "a significant cut" in defense manpower.

Schlesinger's position is that

next year's defense spending budget should total about \$102 billion — or about \$9 billion over this fiscal year's level.

There are indications that the administration is now moving in the direction of the total proposed by Schlesinger before his dismissal.

Schlesinger, who describes himself as a "Taft Republican," pointedly declined to endorse the re-election of Mr. Ford until he saw how the national security issue "shaped up" in the presidential campaign. He said he wants to educate the American public about the "adverse trends" in defense spending.

"We as a nation are indulging in an ostrich syndrome in burying our heads in the sand and not observing what is going on," he said yesterday, as he repeated his theme that the Soviet Union was increasing its defense investment while that of the United States was decreasing.

He said he thinks the United States is still qualitatively militarily superior to the Soviet Union. But when "the question of political will" is included, he said, "the Soviet Union is in a position in which it has the initiative."

New York Times

Two Ships Sunk

Agana, Guam

Two ships sank when a typhoon swept past Guam, but the 99 persons aboard them were rescued, officials said yesterday.

Reuters