

2 AGENCIES CLASH OVER WAR TOXINS

State Department Opposes Production by Army as Negating Nixon Ruling

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The Pentagon and the State Department are at loggerheads over whether President Nixon's decision last month on chemical-biological warfare included some of the most potent and practical elements in this area of America's arsenal—disease-producing toxins.

The quarrel has reached the point, according to informed sources, where Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security affairs, has instructed the Army to stop producing toxins until the National Security Council can clarify the President's decision.

In the meantime, however, State Department officials have made it clear in private conversations that if the Army is allowed to continue producing toxins, they feel the United States will lose both the practical and propaganda advantages it has reaped in the wake of the President's announcement.

On Nov. 25, Mr. Nixon renounced the first use by this country of chemicals and the use of all biological agents.

He also ordered the destruction of existing stocks of germ weapons and the limitation of biological research to defensive measures.

A few experts in the chemical-biological area regard the Army's insistence on keeping its stockpile of toxins and on producing more as an "end run" to defeat the limitation on chemical-biological facilities and stocks ordered by the President.

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The more widely accepted interpretation, however, seems to be that Mr. Nixon's speech left the question of toxins up in the air and that the Army began to produce toxins again because it regarded them as chemicals. The President's decision did not restrict the production of chemical agents.

Toxins are the dead but poisonous by-products or end products of bacteria. Since they are not living, the Army—and many experts—do not consider them agents of biological warfare. On the other hand, the toxins of possible military value cannot be produced without producing bacteria.

What this means, the experts point out, is that the Army's biological production facility at Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas would have to be maintained to produce the germs that generate toxins.

Keeping It Going

"The assembly line [at Pine Bluff] would just keep going," said one official who had predicted after the President's speech that the arsenal would be dismantled.

Some of those familiar with chemical-biological warfare, see the continued operation of the Pine Bluff facility as a threat to any effect the President's in chemical-biological weapons.

"We try to match any weapons we know other countries have, and sometimes we try to match weapons we suspect they have," one expert commented. "Now turn that around. Here we are still operating a biological facility at Pine Bluff."

"We say we would be producing biological agents at Pine Bluff only to get toxins," one official said. "But a biological is a biological—how would Russia know we aren't producing germs there to use as weapons?"

The official also expressed concern that the international goodwill generated by the President's decision "would go down the drain." "Other countries are likely to think the whole thing was meaningless, a hoax," he said, if the United States keeps on producing toxins.

A Pentagon spokesman confirmed at a press briefing last Friday that the Defense Department regarded toxins as

chemical, not biological, agents.

An Army technical manual, "Military Biology and Biological Agents" lists some of the diseases that can be induced by toxins as botulism, diphtheria, gas gangrene, staphylococcus food poisoning, tetanus, plague, cholera and typhoid.

One important difference between a germ and a toxin is that the toxin does not multiply in the human body and it is not contagious—it cannot be transmitted from person to another.

This means that toxins must be dispersed like chemical agents, so that they reach each person they are to 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.

On the other hand, a promi-

nent authority on chemical-biological warfare said that toxins were not as reliable weapons as chemical agents like nerve gas.

"The clear intent of the President's decision is undermined," he said, "to no military advantage."

Toxin List Is Secret

The precise toxins that the army is producing and stockpiling is secret. However, the technical manual singles out for separate treatment the botulinum toxin and the staphylococcus toxin.

The botulinum toxin produces botulism—an acute, usually fatal disease. The staphylococcus toxin produces a food poisoning usually characterized, according to the manual, by "severe nausea,

vomiting, stomach cramps, severe diarrhea and prostration."

It is known that the Army has manufactured and stored at Pine Bluff more than 20,000 bullets containing botulinum toxin.

In his announcement last month, the President also said the United States would support a British draft treaty submitted to the Geneva disarmament conference. The treaty prohibits the production, stockpiling and use of biological agents.

A spokesman for the British Embassy here said that his Government was interpreting the treaty ban to include toxins.

One usually reliable source issue of whether the draft treaty should include toxins.