

BRITISH TREATY WOULD BAN TOXINS

But Laird Implies They Don't
Come Under Nixon Curb

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The British Government said today that its draft treaty on biological warfare in effect banned the production of disease-inducing toxins.

President Nixon announced last month that the United States would support the British treaty. However, at a news conference this morning Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said that toxins were "in the field of chemical warfare."

Mr. Laird's statement implied that since toxins were chemicals, they were not covered by President Nixon's decision last month to stop producing biological agents and to endorse the British has been submitted to the Geneva disarmament conference.

Mr. Laird also said that there was no disagreement between the Department of State and the Department of Defense on whether the Army should produce toxins. The New York Times reported this morning that the Pentagon favored retaining toxins in the American arsenal, while the State Department urged that they be given up.

Toxins are the dead but poisonous byproducts and end products of bacteria. They can induce such diseases as botulism, diphtheria, staphylococcus food poisoning and typhoid.

Produces Bacteria

Since the toxins 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.

This fact—that bacteria have to be produced before toxins can be generated—brings the production of toxins under the British treaty, according to a spokesman for the British Embassy here.

After cabling London, the spokesman said that toxins were not themselves covered by the treaty. However, he continued, the British Government did consider "the production and possession of bacteria for the development of toxins prohibited."

The British draft treaty prohibits the stockpiling, production and use of biological agents. It allows biological research only for defensive purposes.

At his news conference, Mr. Laird said of chemical and biological warfare production that the "whole program is under review." He also said that the interpretation of the British treaty was "a matter that we will consider separately when we get into negotiations."

A State Department spokesman said the department agreed with the Pentagon that "the definition of toxins as chemical agents is correct from a technical standpoint." He also said that whether the Army would retain toxins "is currently under interagency discussion."