

LAIRD DISCOUNTS BIG ARMS SAVINGS

MAY 27 1972

Reaction to Pact in Capital
Mostly Favorable but Some
Conservatives Are Critical

NYTimes

By JUAN M. VASQUEZ

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 26—Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird today hailed the United States arms agreement with the Soviet Union but warned against the expectation of major cost savings.

Returning to the capital after several days of discussions with Atlantic Alliance defense ministers in Brussels, Mr. Laird declared that the agreement to limit strategic arms "will enhance the national security of the United States."

He asserted, however, that "we still need to keep up our guard" and that the United States must "maintain a technological superior position."

He added, "There will be no savings as far as the request for offensive strategic weapons which have been presented to the Congress in the 1973 budget."

Specifically, he cited the Air Force B-1 bomber program and submarine construction as areas in which Congress might seek reductions according to reports he had heard. "That just cannot be," he said.

Mr. Laird, a former Congressman from Wisconsin, told

Continued on Page 10, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

reporters that it was "absolutely essential" to continue research and development of a new series of submarines that are to hold 20 to 24 long-range missile launchers, named Trident.

Congress has been asked to provide \$977-million for this program in fiscal year 1973, although production is not planned until 1978, after the treaty announced today expires.

Mr. Laird's comments, coming a few hours before announcement of the details of the arms agreement, appeared intended to placate conservative critics who feel the agreement will weaken American security, as well as to head off any legislators who might seize on the agreement as justification for a sizable decrease in defense spending.

The immediate reaction to the agreement from other quarters was generally favor-

able. But it included conservative expressions of misgiving over the understanding as well as calls from organizations such as the Council for a Livable World, which supports arms control, for more extensive limitation.

Stennis Supports Pact

Senator John C. Stennis, the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, gave his support to the agreement.

The Mississippi Democrat, whose help will be crucial in developing support for that part of the agreement requiring Senate ratification, said: "I hope that Congress will be able to support such a first step toward limitations."

Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, a moderate Republican, endorsed the agreement and said he was confident the Senate would "overwhelmingly support this treaty."

But other Republican figures, such as Senator Strom Thur-

mond of South Carolina, were critical. Mr. Thurmond said that the treaty gave the Russians a numerical advantage in missiles, adding that he would wait before deciding whether to support the agreement in Congress.

Senator James L. Buckley, Conservative-Republican of New York, said he had "grave misgivings" over the agreement's provisions on defensive missiles.

Jackson Strongly Critical

"It is quite clear that the agreement will have to be subjected to the most careful examination and debate before it can be determined whether ratification is in the nation's interest," he said.

One of the strongest statements of criticism came from Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, a leading Senate figure regarding strategic weapons.

Mr. Jackson a candidate for the Democratic Presidential

nomination, said: "The present agreements are likely to lead to an accelerated technological arms race with great uncertainties, profound instabilities and considerable costs."

He declared that the numerical advantage given to the Soviet Union in nuclear missiles "must be a principal focus of an intensive Congressional inquiry."

At his news conference at Andrews Air Force Base, Mr. Laird said he was confident of Congressional support for the agreement.

Asked whether the agreements would "freeze" Soviet arms superiority, he said he would not discuss details of the agreements. But he contended that they would slow the accelerating momentum of the arms race.

He said the American arms program "is not based upon the quantitative aspects in the strategic area" but on the "qualitative aspects."