

MAY 30 1975

When U.S.

Might Use

A-Weapons

Washington

Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger has told Congress that a conventional Soviet-led attack against Western Europe may force the United States to use battlefield nuclear weapons to avoid defeat.

In an explicit statement of American readiness to use nuclear weapons against conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact, Schlesinger said efforts should be made to insure that an atomic retaliation was defensive to reduce the risk of the conflict's growing into all-out nuclear war.

"However, the attack should be delivered with sufficient shock and decisiveness to forcibly change the perceptions of Warsaw Pact leaders and create a situation conducive to negotiations," he said.

Schlesinger made his comments in a report submitted to Congress a few weeks ago on "the theater nuclear force posture in Europe." He was required to submit a report on battlefield nuclear

Back Page Col. 1

A-WEAPONS

From Page 1

weapons as part of last year's defense budget legislation.

An unclassified version of the study was made available yesterday.

There are basically three types of military forces assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact forces: strategic, or long-range, nuclear forces; theater or battlefield, nuclear forces; and conventional non-nuclear forces.

During the period of unquestioned American nuclear superiority, strategy was based on deterrence through "the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons in lieu of large conventional forces," Schlesinger said.

In 1967, this policy was changed to one of "flexible response" using a combination of conventional and nuclear forces, he noted.

Because the Soviet Union has now achieved parity with the United States in strategic forces, he said, greater emphasis must fall on conventional forces and theater nuclear forces.

The report said there are 7000 American nuclear warheads in Western Europe, with two-thirds consigned to use by allied forces in case of war and one-third to

American forces. All the warheads are under control of U.S. personnel until turned over for allied use.

Most defense analysts believe that the NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional forces are roughly equal, with the Communist forces possessing numerical advantages in men, tanks and air—superior in quality of tanks and planes.

Schlesinger said that, although NATO conventional forces are supposed to be able to hold their own with the Warsaw Pact, "It is possible to envision significantly worse circumstances than those planning assumptions, in which NATO conventional forces are unable to hold under conventional attack."

"Consequently, such a contingency makes it impossible to rule out NATO first use of theater nuclear forces," he said.

"The first use of theater nuclear forces, even in very limited ways, carries grave risks of escalation and should be considered only when the consequences of conventional defeat would be even more serious," he continued.

"If the alternative is, for example, major loss of NATO territory or forces, NATO political leaders may choose to accept the risks of first use."

New York Times