

SCHLESINGER GETS SENATE'S BACKING

His Nomination Confirmed
as Secretary of Defense

By JOHN W. FINNEY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 28 —

The Senate unanimously confirmed today the nomination of James R. Schlesinger to be Secretary of Defense, thus filling a vacuum in the top Pentagon leadership created by the reshuffling of the Nixon Cabinet in the wake of the Watergate affair. The voice vote was 91 to 0.

Dr. Schlesinger, a 44-year-old economist who for the last five months had been serving as Director of Central Intelligence and before that as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, is expected to be sworn into office early next week.

In a hierarchial military establishment that some officials have said was beginning to lose its sense of direction for lack of stable top leadership, Dr. Schlesinger will become the third Secretary of Defense in six months — rapid turnover never before experienced by the Pentagon.

The post of Defense Secretary has been vacant since May 25 when President Nixon drafted Elliot L. Richardson to be his new Attorney General in charge of investigating the Watergate affair. Mr. Richardson, who had succeeded Melvin R. Laird as Defense Secretary in January, had just, by his own admission, begun to understand the complexities of the job when he left the Pentagon.

Held Various Posts

As a former strategic analyst with the Rand Corporation who rose to become an assistant director of the Budget Bureau, A.E.C. chairman and finally Director of Central Intelligence, Dr. Schlesinger is not expected to have as much difficulty as many of his predecessors in mastering the Pentagon post.

But whether he will bring about any substantial changes in present defense policies and budget is still a matter of debate and concern among Pentagon critics and defenders on Capitol Hill.

In his confirmation hearings 10 days ago before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Dr. Schlesinger generally stood as a defender of past defense budget that he predicted would rise because of increasing personal costs, defended the President's authority to bomb in Cambodia and suggested there might be circumstances, although he did not expect them to materialize, in which he would recommend resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam.

It was a position that he reinforced in answering a series of questions posed by Senator William Proxmire, Democrat of Wisconsin, who had held up Senate action on the nomination as he sought clarification of Dr. Schlesinger's views, particularly on the possibility of renewing the bombing of North Vietnam.

Dr. Schlesinger said that the



The New York Times

James R. Schlesinger

only circumstance in which he could foresee any possibility of renewing the bombing would be "major aggressive actions by the North Vietnamese which would threaten South Vietnam in obvious violation of the Paris agreements." He added he did "not believe that such circumstances will arise."

In answers to other Proxmire questions, he defended the continuing bombing in Cambodia as "an important element in the efforts to achieve a workable Indochina cease-fire." At the same time he expressed the "hope that we could begin to reduce and terminate our air operations soon, as the effects of the recent cease-fire agreement begin to take hold."

He committed himself to look for "economies and efficiencies in defense operations and management" but cautioned that budget reductions could lead to "a lowered state of readiness, which could be very costly indeed if the contingencies for which we maintain a defense establishment should occur."