

Nuclear Diplomacy Still Practiced

By Jack Anderson

The Christmas theme of peace on earth has been profaned, regrettably, by the men who control the nuclear switches.

They still engage in nuclear diplomacy, and the horror weapons are poised in their silos and submarines ready for the ultimate holocaust.

In less than a dozen years, there have been at least three nuclear confrontations. The latest occurred only last October, as Soviet attack submarines targeted on U.S. warships and both superpowers ordered their forces on alert.

The public has been given only the sketchiest details of the incidents that could have ended in nuclear devastation. Here are the stark facts, which men of goodwill would do well to ponder while the carolers sing of peace on earth:

During the 1962 missile crisis, as the world is aware, John Kennedy ordered our nuclear forces on red alert.

President Kennedy threw a naval blockade around Cuba, calling it a "quarantine," with orders to stop Soviet missile

shipments from entering Cuban waters. Nikita Khrushchev, then the cock of the Kremlin, responded with a blistering secret message.

Nevertheless, Kennedy called the Joint Chiefs into the Situation Room in the White House basement. He plunged a thumb tack into an Atlantic map and ordered the Joint Chiefs to intercept any Soviet ships that reached the point of the thumb tack.

Soviet ships, loaded with Cuba-bound missiles, arrived at the crucial spot. The President called the Joint Chiefs back into the Situation Room. Slowly, he withdrew the tack from the map, moved it back and pressed it into the map again. "Let's give them a little more time," he instructed. "But when they reach this point, you'll have to stop them."

As the missile-laden Soviet ships approached the second thumb tack, orders from Moscow turned them around.

Kennedy's handling of the Cuban confrontation made a deep impression on Richard Nixon. He spoke admiringly of the cold courage Kennedy had

demonstrated when he faced an imminent nuclear explosion.

In December, 1971, President Nixon had an opportunity to stage his own nuclear show-down in the Bay of Bengal.

While Pakistan and India fought over the dreary, humid, painfully impoverished piece of earth now called Bangladesh, the United States, the Soviet Union and China issued orders. Armies and navies with hydrogen-headed missiles responded.

It turned out to be a limited, two-week war. But it could have been otherwise. The secret intelligence reports reveal that the three superpowers were being sucked into the vortex of war.

The world was spared, but none of the big powers can take credit. The war was not ended by the menacing moves of the Russians, Americans and Chinese, but by the collapse of the Pakistani army in Bangladesh.

Again, at the height of the latest Arab-Israeli war in October, the United States and the Soviet Union moved their nuclear forces on the world chessboard.

Seven Soviet airborne divisions in full combat gear were

moved to embarkation points. The airlift of military supplies to Egypt and Syria was suddenly halted to make the planes available to haul the waiting troops.

A flotilla of warships, landing ships and back-up ships moved out of the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. The Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean quickly swelled to 90 vessels, one-third more than the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet. At least 20 Soviet attack submarines appeared on the tails of U.S. carriers and other key ships.

Then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, in a blunt secret message declaring "I will say it straight," called upon President Nixon to join him in sending troops to stop the alleged Israeli cease-fire violations. Otherwise, he threatened to send in Soviet troops unilaterally.

The President responded instead by ordering a worldwide military alert. The Soviet forces never left Russia. Tensions were relaxed. But once again, mankind had taken a step dangerously close to the nuclear brink.

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