

Schlesinger Rebutts Kissinger Remark, Denies Pentagon Impeded Arms Talks

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WASHINGTON, July 3—Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger today rejected as unfounded a suggestion by Secretary of State Kissinger that the Pentagon had impeded progress toward a further Soviet-American agreement on limiting offensive nuclear arms.

"I think we have firm civilian control," Mr. Schlesinger said at a news conference. He spoke in response to a question about Mr. Kissinger's statement at a news conference in Moscow today that Soviet and United States leaders have to convince their military establishments of the benefits of restraint.

The military will express their views, he said, but when the President makes a decision "they will support that decision."

At the same time, Mr. Schlesinger sought to dispel reports of disagreements and problems with the Administration with regard to the nuclear-arms negotiations.

"I fully endorse what has taken place and I consider it significant," Mr. Schlesinger said.

Tension Reported Between 2

He said that "anything that can sustain this dialogue is a desirable development," but he added that it was a "fragile development" as well.

The Kissinger and Schlesinger news conferences were held against a backdrop of reliable reports of increasing tension between the two Secretaries. In the eyes of informed officials, they seem to be drifting toward a confrontation that neither considers wise, but that continues to be fueled by public Kissinger criticism of the Pentagon and public although veiled Pentagon response.

Joining in the Schlesinger news conference was Fred C. Ikle, head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, who also expressed approval of what had been accomplished in Moscow. He noted however, that nuclear-arms issues were complex and moved slowly.

In their prepared remarks

and in replies to questions, both Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Ikle stressed what they described as the procedural breakthroughs in dealing with Moscow on the proposed treaty to ban underground nuclear tests of a magnitude above 150 kilotons—equivalent to the explosive force of 150,000 tons of TNT—except for explosions designed for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Ikle said that the Soviet Union had agreed to designate test areas in advance, to exchange geological data to allow better measurement of weapons yield and to fire two "calibrating shots" so that standards could be set.

He said an unwritten agreement had been reached to allow observers from the other side to witness "peaceful" explosions. But this is an agreement in principle. Efforts to translate it into an actual accord are yet to be undertaken by Soviet and American negotiators.

On-Site Inspection Problem

In the past, the Soviet Union has opposed proposals for on-site inspection, although it made a negotiating offer of two or three sites during the unsuccessful attempts in the early nineteen-sixties to negotiate a ban on underground tests in addition to the ban on tests in the atmosphere, space and under the sea. That offer was in response to an American proposal of eight sites.

On the substance of the now proposed treaty to limit underground tests, Mr. Schlesinger carefully balanced his remarks. On one hand, he said that both sides would be able to complete their current weapons-testing programs in the 21 months before the treaty takes effect. On the other hand, he maintained the treaty "will tend to constrain further optimization" of new nuclear warheads.

The bulk of the news conference, however, was devoted to questions about reported splits within the Administration over how to approach further nuclear-arms limitation agreements with Moscow. Mr. Schlesinger, a high official later explained, was "caught" on this issue and "fudged" his answers to avoid a confrontation with the President and Mr. Kissinger.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Schlesinger simply said that the Pentagon "had registered its views through the National Security Council system," the Pentagon position has been that the United States should avoid agreements in Moscow that might preclude or reduce pressures for a more comprehensive agreement at a later point.

Schlesinger View Cited

Mr. Schlesinger was not opposed to Mr. Kissinger's idea of seeking an agreement in Moscow that would limit future Soviet deployment of multiple nuclear warheads, as MIRV'S in return for a ceiling on American MIRV'S. But informed sources have said that Mr. Schlesinger wanted any agreement reached in Moscow to hold open prospects for a broader accord.

The current interim agreement on limiting offensive nuclear arms expires in 1977 and encompasses only missiles. Mr. Schlesinger view, the sources said, was that extension of this agreement would lead to an accelerated arms race in areas not covered by the accord, such as long-range bombers and further improvements in missiles.

Mr. Kissinger's position, high officials have said, was that Soviet leaders would not accept this approach and that Washington's immediate aim should be to seek limits on MIRV deployments. These same officials said that Mr. Nixon flew to Moscow without a basic reconciliation of the Kissinger-Schlesinger positions.

A Careful Response

Mr. Schlesinger seemed to deny this report in a carefully worded response to a question. He said that before the President left, "there was an understanding across this Administration of a general approach" that the President would take.

This answer appeared to leave open to interpretation of exactly what course of action the President might pursue in his direct talks with Soviet leaders. On this point, however, Mr. Schlesinger said "we were kept currently informed."

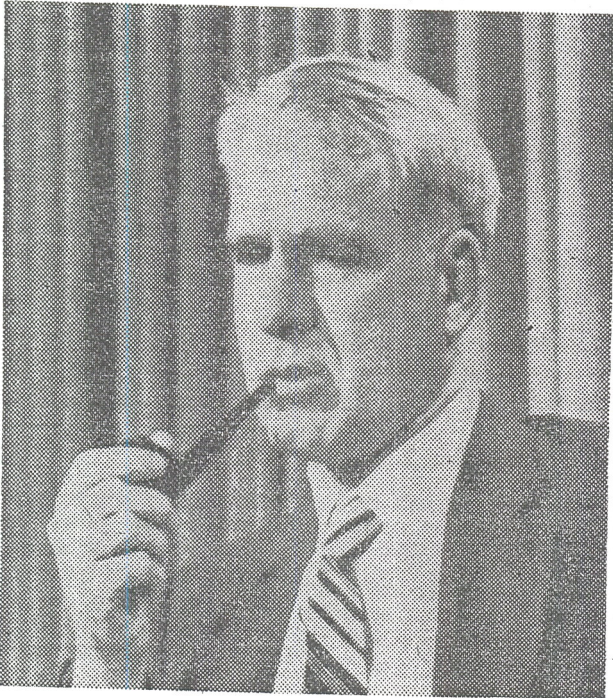
In response to another question, he said that the Pentagon had not taken a "firm position" with regard to a comprehensive accord and would welcome either a broad or a limited agreement.

Asked why no agreement was reached in Moscow, he first answered that there was no basis for accord "in detailed terms," but later also said there was not "as yet an adequate conceptual understanding" either.

Mr. Schlesinger, however, did underline one important area of agreement with Mr. Kissinger. This morning Mr. Kissinger expressed misgivings about continued nuclear-arms competition.

This afternoon Mr. Schlesinger said that more competition "serves no further purpose" and that the levels of nuclear forces "already reached are unnecessarily high."

He said that the results of the Moscow summit meeting would not lead him to recommend either a speed-up or a slowdown in current American research-and-development programs on nuclear weapons.



Associated Press

James R. Schlesinger, Defense Secretary, at his news conference on arms yesterday at the Pentagon.