

Pentagon supports nuclear test resumption

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon supports the resumption of nuclear weapons testing "at the earliest possible time" under current law, a senior Defense Department official said Monday.

Faced with a July 1 deadline, the Clinton administration must decide soon whether to resume testing after a nine-month break — a decision that could lead Russia and France to do so, as well.

John Deutch, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition and the chairman of the Nuclear Weapons Council, stressed the importance of testing in testimony to the House Armed Services Committee's nuclear energy panel.

"We need to conduct these tests to position the United States to the extent that it is possible, to maintain a safe, secure, reliable and effective nuclear deterrent after testing is halted," Deutch said.

"Therefore, the Department of Defense supports the resumption of nuclear testing at the ear-

liest possible time under the provisions" of the law.

Last year, as part of the fiscal 1993 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill, Congress approved a measure imposing a nine-month moratorium on nuclear weapons tests beginning in October 1992. That moratorium expires July 1.

The plan, sponsored by Republican Sen. Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Democratic Sens. J. James Exon of Nebraska and George Mitchell of Maine, also put strict limits on subsequent tests and imposed a total ban beginning Oct. 1, 1996.

Between the end of the nine-month moratorium and the date of the total prohibition, nuclear tests cannot exceed 15.

The total ban would be waived if Russia resumes testing after that date.

Former President Bush opposed the congressional action last year but then-candidate Bill Clinton said he supported a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons testing.

The hearing focused on the

future of the national laboratories, including Lawrence Livermore, Sandia and Los Alamos. Legislation has been proposed that would reorganize the labs, including converting one to non-defense work.

Since last year's action, the national laboratories have lobbied for early resumption of testing, hoping to preserve thousands of jobs associated with the testing program.

Testing opponents began a lobbying counterattack this week, writing letters to the administration and arguing for a total ban on testing beginning in 1996.

The Energy Department had already signaled its intentions by putting \$462 million into its fiscal 1994 budget request for four nuclear weapons tests. The House Armed Services Committee begins legislative action on that request May 20.

Deutch testified that without nuclear testing, the technical judgment of scientists and engineers "will be based on theory,

calculations, adaptations of archival test data, and data available from non-nuclear tests."

"Only nuclear tests can provide data on the nuclear aspects of the integrated weapon system performance," he said.

The Pentagon official also cited the loss of scientific personnel at Energy Department weapons laboratories during the nuclear test moratorium of 1958 to 1961 and the suspension of nuclear testing by the United Kingdom between 1966 and 1973.

"This loss of trained technical personnel jeopardizes our ability to adequately support the safety, security, reliability and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear stockpile," Deutch said.

John Nuckolls, director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, told the House panel that the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the uncertainty among the remaining republics creates a new nuclear danger.

Senator tries to snub confederate flag insignia

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, D-Ill., is asking her colleagues to deny the United Daughters of the Confederacy a patent renewal for an insignia that features the Confederate flag.

Moseley-Braun said members of the group have every right to honor their Civil War ancestors and to use the flag in the insignia.

But since the group seeks a congressional imprimatur, she said, "then those of us whose ancestors fought on a different side of the conflict or were held as human chattel under the flag of the Confederacy have no choice but to honor our ancestors by asking whether such action is appropriate."

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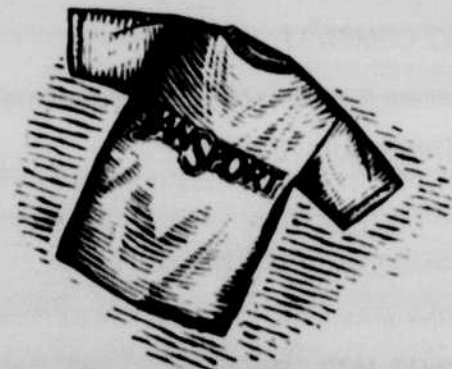
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