

McConnell, in Speech, Asks Combination ABM System

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Gen. John P. McConnell, chief of staff of the Air Force, made a public appeal in a speech in Detroit last night for construction of "a balanced combination of terminal and area defenses" against intercontinental ballistic missiles.

It was the first time that the dispute between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara over the need for an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system had been carried into the public arena in such a direct way.

The Joint Chiefs favor the deployment of a system of long-range defensive missiles combined with intensive protection for 25 cities, but capable of being expanded to protect 50 cities. McNamara feels such an ABM system would be countered by an increase in Soviet missiles and would merely accelerate the nuclear arms race.

The difference of opinion between McNamara and the JCS was highlighted early this year when Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, read a specially prepared statement to a congressional committee urging deployment of the ABM system.

McConnell Cites China

In his speech, prepared for delivery at a Michigan aviation and Space Week awards banquet, McConnell declared:

"I think it is important on this

occasion to note that our need for an effective aerospace defense capability has been further emphasized by reports of Communist China's recent progress in the nuclear field."

This contrasted with statements by defense officials that the Red Chinese test of a hydrogen bomb has not changed their earlier estimates of the rate of Chinese progress toward deployment of a nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile force.

At another point in his speech, McConnell seemed to be replying to McNamara's contention that an ABM system would not protect the country from destruction.

Sees Survival Chance

"It has often been said that, in a general war, there will be no winners—only losers in varying degrees, McConnell said, "It is thus unlikely that even the best defense system can turn back or destroy all of the attacking forces of a determined enemy. But an effective defense which provides warning and protection for our national resources would allow us to emerge from a war with the essential elements of our society intact. It would mean that the difference between our destruction or survival as a sovereign state."

While the country is now well prepared to meet any bomber attack, McConnell said, it does not yet have a defense against nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles—"the gravest threat we face today."

He emphasized, as he did in congressional testimony last February, his belief that an essential element of any ABM defense is a strong defense for U.S. missiles, whose capability to strike back with devastating fury after any attack on this country is designed to deter any potential enemy.

His testimony at that time indicated that the other members of the Joint Chiefs were more concerned with providing a defense system for the nation's cities.

In his speech last night, he did not spell out how strong a defense system he favored, nor how soon it should be built.

"Just how much damage-limiting capability the U.S. should acquire depends on the technical problems, on the cost of limiting damage, on the levels of attack, and on our estimate of the value of less than perfect defenses against

any possible nuclear conflicts," he said.

There is growing pressure for an early start on deployment of a "thin" ABM defense designed to protect the country against an accidental missile launch or an unsophisticated attack from China. That would cost \$3.5 billion for an area defense and about \$5 billion if it included special protection for the U.S. missile force.

McNamara has not opposed such a "thin" system but has argued that there is no need to rush into construction because it will still be several more years before China can launch even a low-intensity attack.

Caution Need Stressed

McConnell also emphasized the need for caution in making sure that the best possible system is deployed.

"We do not believe..." he said, "that we should go all out in building an extensive and very costly system against the ballistic missile until we are reasonably certain that such a system would not be outdated by the time it became operational. Fortunately, our present strategic offensive strength provides us the time in which to examine carefully our present technology and future trends."

McNamara has estimated that a full 50-city system—which he feels would be demanded once a decision had been made to protect some cities—would cost about \$40 billion.