

TUESDAY MORNING, 18 JANUARY 1983

WASHINGTON POST 18 JANUARY 1983 Pg. 11

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2 U.S. Peace-Keepers Injured by Mine in Sinai

TEL AVIV, Jan. 17 (AP)—Two American soldiers were wounded, one seriously, by a mine explosion in the Sinai Peninsula today, the multinational peace-keeping force announced.

The Americans were believed to be the first casualties suffered by the 11-nation, 2,600-man force since it began policing the eastern Sinai last April after Israel returned the final portion of the desert peninsula to Egypt.

In Washington, the Army identified the two wounded men as 1st Lt. Richard N. Fincher, 25, of Waxhaw, N.C., who was listed in critical condition, and Pfc. Albert R. Brown, 18, of Springfield, Mass., in stable condition.

The multinational force's Tel Aviv office denied an Israel radio report that a third soldier was killed by the mine explosion. The radio report said a helicopter took the two wounded men to Yoseftal Hospital in Eilat.

The Pentagon said the wounded men were from the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division, based at Fort Campbell, Ky.

The office of the multinational force gave no details of the explosion but said it was investigating. Israel radio said it occurred at the southern tip of Sinai, near the town of Ophira which Israel built during its occupation of the peninsula and ceded to Egypt when its forces withdrew nine months ago.

NITZE'S ROLE...Cont.

was willing to explore.... [It] was turned down flatly by the Soviet Union in September."

Last weekend the story was revived by some officials who cited this incident as a cause for last week's firing of Rostow as director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Those officials said Rostow had been aware of Nitze's informal negotiations and initially defended him when White House national security affairs adviser William P. Clark wanted to discipline him.

However, most government officials, including Reagan, have maintained that Rostow's firing stemmed from personal and managerial differences rather than the Nitze incident.

According to informed sources, Nitze and Kvitinsky, two experienced negotiators, reached an extraordinary agreement between themselves last July on a new "package" approach to the negotiations on limiting nuclear missiles in Europe, which appeared to them to have bogged down after two rounds of discussion.

The package, these sources said, included the following elements.

- The Soviets would freeze the number of their intermediate-range SS20 nuclear missiles based in the Far East and reduce the number of SS20s in central and western Russia that are aimed at western European targets.

- The United States would not deploy the Pershing II, the missile the Soviets most feared because it could hit Soviet territory within eight minutes after launch from planned bases in West Germany. The United States also would limit the number of

ground-launched cruise missiles stationed in Europe, depending on the number of Soviet European-based SS20s.

No number was set, but the United States would be left with more warheads and fewer launchers because an SS20 carries three nuclear warheads while a cruise missile launcher will fire four separate nuclear missiles.

- There would be limitations on the number of nuclear-capable aircraft in Europe with the goal of equalizing numbers for both the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, and particularly American and Soviet planes.

This package strayed considerably from the initial negotiating positions put forward by the two countries.

The original Soviet position called for a reduction in NATO and Warsaw Pact nuclear systems, both aircraft and ground and sub-launched missiles, to 300 by 1990. This would prevent the United States from deploying either the Pershing II or cruise missiles force it to reduce the number of its nuclear-capable aircraft.

The U.S. position was to negotiate only about missiles and to pursue a "zero option" under which the United States would not deploy any of the planned 103 Pershing or 164 cruise missiles if the Soviets agreed to destroy not only their roughly 300 older SS4 and SS5 missiles but also all of their 300 new, deployed SS20s.

The U.S. and Soviet negotiators, sources said, tried to narrow the wide gap between the two positions by establishing a logical framework for missiles and bombers without setting specific numbers.

For example, the Soviets wanted to include British and French nuclear

missile systems within the American totals, while the United States wanted to eliminate all SS20s in the Soviet arsenal, even those stationed in the Far East and targeted on China.

The Nitze-Kvitinsky approach, one source said, was to freeze the number of SS20s in the Far East and appear to equate them to the British and French systems. That left the opportunity to reach some parity between U.S. and Soviet missile warheads in the European area.

In July, after Nitze's initiative became known in Washington, some Reagan administration officials argued that the arms control expert had exceeded his authority and should be reprimanded. He was not. But when Nitze, 76, returned to Geneva in September for the third round of negotiations, his instructions sharply limited his authority to engage in such exploratory discussions.

He felt so tied by his instructions that he used Hart one day as an intermediary with Kvitinsky to explore hints of a new Soviet negotiating position. As the three lunched together, the two negotiators posed questions and offered answers to each other through Hart, who later said he "served as a hollow log".

Although he cabled the informal new Soviet positions to Washington, Nitze was not given any authority to follow them up, according to sources.

Much of the Soviet proposal since made public by Andropov appears to have roots in the Nitze-Kvitinsky discussions last summer, including separate limits for missiles and aircraft, rough parity on numbers of missile warheads rather than launchers, and the destruction of some SS20s.