

C/S - MANSFIELD SWITCHES ON TROOP CUTS

WASHINGTON, AUG 22 (UPI) - SENATE LEADER MIKE MANSFIELD REVERSED HIS POSITION ON U.S. TROOPS IN EUROPE TODAY, DECLARING THAT THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA MADE IT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN U.S. TROOPS IN EUROPE AT PRESENT STRENGTH.

THE MONTANA DEMOCRAT, WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF A SENATE RESOLUTION CALLING UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM EUROPE, SAID "BECAUSE OF THIS INVASION, IT APPEARS TO ME THAT WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO MAINTAIN OUR PRESENT POSITION."

"THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA BY THE SOVIET UNION AND WARSAW PACT NATIONS HAS, FOR THE TIME BEING, AT LEAST, PUT AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PICTURE ON THE QUESTION OF U.S. TROOPS WITHDRAWALS FROM WESTERN EUROPE."

THE U.S. TROOP STRENGTH IN NATO COUNTRIES IS ABOUT 350,000. MANSFIELD SAID IT COST ABOUT 2.7 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR TO MAINTAIN THEM AND THEIR DEPENDENTS.

BUT AS FAR AS THE CZECH CRISIS WAS CONCERNED THERE WAS NOTHING NATO TROOPS COULD DO, MANSFIELD SAID, ADDING:

"THIS WOULD APPLY IF WE HAD ONLY HALF THE PRESENT TROOP STRENGTH IN EVIDENCE, OR FOR THAT MATTER DOUBLE THE PRESENT TROOP STRENGTH.

"HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION, IT WOULD BE PSYCHOLOGICALLY BAD, IN MY OPINION, EVEN TO CONSIDER AT THIS TIME THE POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING U.S. FORCES WHILE THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES ARE CARRYING ON THE SORT OF ACTIVITY WHICH IS NOW IN EFFECT."

MANSFIELD RETURNED SUNDAY FROM EASTERN EUROPE, WHERE HE CONFERRED WITH CZECHOSLOVAK OFFICIALS. HE ALSO WAS IN RUSSIA AND ROMANIA. HE SAID HE FILED A WRITTEN REPORT MONDAY WITH PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND HAD BEEN DISCUSSING THE SITUATION WITH HIM.