

working hard to achieve this in the chemical disarmament talks in Geneva. But we have no illusions about how difficult that is going to be, and a U.S. decision to develop and produce new chemical weapons might provide a new incentive to an agreement."

Abshire's statement that the ministers need merely take note of the NATO committee's decision is seen by some as a deliberate effort to bypass political debate in Europe. U.S. officials in NATO point out, however, that the wording of the congress-

sional resolution says the force goal only needs to be "adopted," not "approved" by the council.

"Chemical rearmament in Europe is not a light issue, it is something that should be fully debated before the important decisions are taken," says Julian Perry-Robinson, a specialist in chemical weapons policy at Sussex University's Science Policy Research Unit in Britain. "This procedure seems to be designed to avoid that process; indeed, one might conclude that the intent of Congress [for a full European debate] is not being followed."

Realizing the imminence of the decision, parliamentary opposition parties in several European countries, as well as religious and peace groups, are hurriedly trying to mount a last minute campaign designed to prevent the NATO ministers from endorsing the U.S. force goal at their May meeting.

In Bonn, for example, the SPD, backed by the Greens, has tabled a motion requesting an emergency debate in the Federal Parliament, the Bundestag. A similar motion claiming that "if U.S. production is approved there will be a new arms race in chemical and biological weaponry" is expected to be approved by the Socialist Group in the European Parliament at the beginning of next month.

Britain's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is circulating a briefing document to all members of the British Parliament. And wide publicity was given in the Dutch press last weekend to a press conference condemning the U.S. proposals held by one of Holland's leading antinuclear activists, Mient Jan Farber, the head of the Interkerkelijk Vredesbaard (Interchurch Council).

Some of these opponents are predicting that their case will be boosted by the backlash in Europe against last week's attack by the United States on Libya. "I can imagine some NATO ministers wanting to find a way of expressing their criticism of the American action," says one member of the European Parliament.

Others say they detect a sudden increase in public interest sparked by press reports of the decisions in Brussels. "Up to a few weeks ago, there was little reaction, since people felt the chemical weapons issue had been resolved long ago, but that is now changing rapidly," says one Dutch peace activist.

Many opponents of chemical weapons, however, feel that they have been outflanked by the low-key way in which the decision-making process has been kept within NATO. "We are trying to get a debate going as urgently as possible, but we fear that the discussion has started too late," says Stehr of the German SPD. ■

DAVID DICKSON

## Binary Deployment Remains Controversial

To Europeans, one of the major attractions of binary chemical weapons is that they need not—and supposedly will not—be stored in Europe. Following loading and assembly at a facility in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, the munitions are to be transported only to depots elsewhere in the United States, according to the Defense Department. Meanwhile, aging munitions now stored at roughly six locations in West Germany will be detoxified and removed before 1995, as directed by Congress in legislation last year.

Thus, the program at first glance enables the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to rid themselves of a politically odious stockpile, as well as make the United States shoulder the economic and political burden of renewed production. This is one reason why an indirect approval for the binaries seems to be moving easily through a subcommittee of the North Atlantic Council (see accompanying story). The only drawback is that the United States could eventually change its mind and put the new weapons in Europe, even without the approval of local governments.

The reason is that no formal agreement exists within NATO on the deployment and use of chemical weapons, as General Frederick Kroesen, a former commander in chief of the U.S. Army in Europe, acknowledged in testimony last year before the House Armed Services Committee. Asked if the binaries might one day be shared with or used by U.S. allies, Kroesen—who recently directed a special chemical weapons study for the Reagan Administration—said, "I do not think we have a policy, sir, at this time."

An official at NATO headquarters in Belgium confirms this statement and notes that the situation contrasts sharply with that involving nuclear weapons, which are subject to a detailed, classified NATO operational agreement. "The European governments would simply prefer not to discuss the chemical issue, for fear of igniting an enormous public controversy," the official says. As a result, responsibility for decision-making on the binaries rests entirely with the United States.

Early last year, the Pentagon provided mixed signals about the degree to which European governments would be consulted prior to overseas deployment of binary weapons. General Charles Donnelly, Jr., for example, the commander in chief of U.S. Air Forces in Europe, said that "it would be an individual political decision by each sovereign nation as to whether they would permit it or not." But Kroesen, appearing at the same hearing, stated flatly that the binaries could potentially be substituted for existing munitions without consent. "I think we have just as much right to do that as we had to exchange tank ammunition when we developed the new type of tank ammunition," he said.

Subsequently, Congress required in legislation that the Pentagon formulate a deployment contingency plan and obtain NATO advice. But the final decisions, on both deployment and use, will clearly be made by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff or by the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), U.S. General Bernard Rogers. As Donnelly acknowledged, "[the] SACEUR, I am sure, having been given the authority to use offensive chemical weapons, would use them in areas where he needed them. . . . They would be used wherever needed, I am confident."

Mindful of European sensitivities on the subject, Richard Ziegler, the chief Pentagon spokesman on chemical matters, emphasizes that "there is no need and there are no plans to place the binaries in Europe, as of right now." But he adds that "I have learned, from long experience, not to predict what the decision will be in the future." ■ R. JEFFREY SMITH