PS1 for 5/19/88#INF TREATY RISKS A NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE

The subject of hostages taken by foreign terrorists has been in the news, off and on, a great deal of the time over the last ten years. We've all agonized about their suffering, sympathized with their families, and debated what to do about the terrible dilemma.

But what if 625,000 American men, women and children were hostages instead of several dozen? Or even 325,000? How would Americans react? What ransom might we pay for their release?

At the present time, 325,000 American troops are stationed in Western Europe, accompanied by their 300,000 dependents. So long as they are part of a credible deterrent against a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, stationing them there makes sense.

But if their most effective weapons are taken away from them, leaving them with only one-fifth as many weapons as a potential enemy, then we must ask, why are they there? Are they just a symbol? And, if so, of what? Are they a paper tiger to become the laughing stock of the world in the face of the five-to-one Soviet-bloc superiority in chemical and conventional weapons?

Worse still, will our 625,000 servicemen and their dependents become instant hostages under a Soviet ultimatum to surrender? Will they become cannon-fodder if the Russians attack Western Europe, confident that Soviet tanks can sweep across the Continent within a week?

Denuclearizing Western Europe, which the INF Treaty attempts to do by eliminating our Pershing IIs and the Soviets' SS-20s, means that the next European war will be fought with the same kinds of non-nuclear weapons we used in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. When it comes to competing with ground troops, tanks and artillery, the Soviet-Warsaw Pact forces are overwhelmingly superior to the U.S.-NATO forces.

Twice in our lifetime, hundreds of thousands of American troops have been risked in a no-win ground war. Both after the Korean War, and again after the Vietnam War, our collective remorse cried, ""Nevermore.'' How can our nation, which bled so badly over the betrayal of the American servicemen sent to Vietnam, do it all over again?

But the proposed Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty is setting us up to let it happen. The treaty eliminates our best weapons in Western Europe, the Pershing IIs, and leaves 625,000 American lives at risk some 4,000 miles away from home, facing off against decisively superior enemy forces.

Former NATO Commander Bernard Rogers has warned that the INF Treaty will make a Soviet attack on Western Europe more (not less) likely. That's because the specific weapons reduction required by the treaty will leave the Soviet Union with such massive superiority that the men in the Kremlin will know that the conquest of Western Europe is within their grasp.

But, say the treaty peddlers, why worry in the new era of glasnost and perestroika? Aren't the Russians friendly now? Alas, according to Evan Galbraith, former U.S. Ambassador to France, just since Gorbachev took power, he has (BF)increased(end BF) his conventional weapons forces (especially tanks and artillery) more than the entire military forces of West Germany and France combined!

If the U.S. Senate determines that glasnost with Gorbachev is such a high priority that it demands withdrawal from Western Europe of our most effective weapons, which were designed and installed for that particular theater, then the Congress should first evacuate American servicemen and their dependents. All Americans in the U.S. Armed Services are entitled to the best available weapons and technology, and, if the U.S. Senate deprives them of that support, then we should

bring them all home before we have a hostage disaster.

Before the U.S. Senate votes on the INF Treaty, it should reflect on how American public opinion reacted to the taking and holding of our hostages by Iran during 1980, to the deaths of our Marines who were recklessly made vulnerable to the car bombing of our Beirut embassy in 1983, to the 1985 highjacking of TWA flight 847 in Athens, and to every news story that involved American hostages over the last several years.

Then the Senators should face up to the fact that the only way to avoid a hostage catastrophe is to evacuate our troops from Western Europe BEFORE the INF Treaty is ratified.