

Wash. Post

10 June 1953

Atomic WARNING

*An Editorial
in The Christian Science Monitor*

The news presents two sharply contrasting approaches to the United States' defense problem. One is the testimony of the retiring Air Force Chief of Staff, General Vandenberg, that 143 wings are essential. The other is the report of the Kelly committee, emphasizing the necessity for effective measures to defend the United States from surprise atomic attack.

The most crucial parts of the Vandenberg testimony were given to a Senate committee in secret. They may show that the proposed \$5 billion cut in Air Force funds will weaken the Air Force two or three years hence. But even under proposed cuts the nation's air power will be sharply increased this year and next.

Meanwhile the Kelly report is a reminder that the whole defense picture is changing and that the controversy over 143 wings may be diverting attention from more basic considerations. The committee of distinguished civilians headed by the president of the Bell Telephone Laboratories warns that the nation is already vulnerable to serious damage from atomic attacks.

Within four or five years danger is foreseen of a surprise blow that could cripple the supply bases and productive capacity on which all military power depends. It would not matter particularly how many wings there might be in the Air Force if half of them could not be serviced.

One feature of the Kelly report merits special attention—its plea for a better early warning system. Here again no amount of planes will suffice unless the defenders are alerted as to the time and place of attack. Indeed, when the defense problem is viewed from this angle the number of wings becomes far less important than eyes and ears to guide them. This is an urgent consideration to which those on both sides of the plane controversy should give more attention.