

Ch. XIV (28)

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MIRV ISSUES

DEP. SEC. HAS SEEN

I. ISSUES CONCERNING AN AGREED BILATERAL MRV/MIRV TEST MORATORIUM DURING TALKS:

A. If the U.S. wishes to keep open the option of eventually being able to agree to a MRV/MIRV test ban, even if we do not wish to propose such a ban at the beginning of talks, a moratorium on testing during talks is necessary.

B. If the U.S. wishes to propose a MRV/MIRV test ban as part of the eventual agreement, a moratorium during talks is also necessary.

C. If the U.S. wishes to foreclose the possibility of a MRV/MIRV test ban, it should not propose or accept a temporary moratorium, either for the duration of talks or for a fixed brief time period.

II. ISSUES CONCERNING WHETHER AN EVENTUAL AGREEMENT SHOULD INCLUDE A MRV/MIRV TEST BAN: Strategic and Verification

A. Strategic:

1. Pro MIRV Ban. We need MIRVs, primarily, only to assure that we can penetrate large Soviet ABM city defenses and thus deter them from initiating nuclear war. ABM limits can and must be low enough under an agreement banning MIRVs to allow us sufficient time to MIRV if the Soviets cheat on the ABM limits.

For an arms control agreement to be negotiable both sides would have to forego any significant efforts to acquire first-strike counterforce capabilities under the agreement. To take advantage of MIRVs' other characteristics -- accuracy and target coverage -- MIRVs must be used in a counterforce first strike.

An effective MIRV ban helps protect Minuteman; thus we would have much less need to deploy ABMs for this purpose.

Under a MIRV ban the Soviets would have no strategically important use for their larger payloads.

2. Against MIRV Ban. MIRVs make our deterrent more credible because they assure that we can penetrate any Soviet city ABM buildup, even a large deployment which is kept hidden from us.

Some believe that we should try to sign an agreement which would allow us a significant capability to limit damage to ourselves and our allies by a counterforce first strike; MIRVs would contribute to this capability.

In the long run, Soviet improvements in accuracy and payload could allow them to threaten Minuteman even if a MIRV ban were effective.

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The low ABM levels necessary under a MIRV ban would probably force us to choose between a thin ABM defense of cities and ABM defense of Minutemen.

Even under a MIRV ban the Soviets could use their larger payloads to deploy large weapons.

B. Verification (assuming a ban on both MRV and MIRV testing):

1. Pro MIRV Ban. The Verification Panel Report for NSSM 28 indicates that we have high confidence that we can detect the testing of multiple re-entry vehicles on ICBMs although we would have less confidence that we could detect such testing on SLBMs.

If the agreement allowed only pre-announced test firings in specified areas our confidence would be increased, since we would need to monitor other areas only to discover if some kinds of firings were taking place.

It would not be necessary for the agreement to ban penetration aid testing, and particularly not chaff testing, for us to have high confidence in verifying a ban on MRV/MIRV testing.

2. Against MIRV Ban. There is disagreement in the intelligence community about whether current Soviet MRV testing has yet reached the stage where the individual RVs can be independently targetted; if it has, the Soviets may soon have enough confidence to deploy a MIRV even if further testing were banned.

Even if test firings were limited to specific ranges, confidence firings might be used for some MIRV development unless these were also constrained.

We should have to ban testing of endo-atmospheric penetration aids as well as testing of any sort of maneuverable RV to have high confidence in verifying a MIRV ban; this would reduce our confidence of being able to respond in time to Soviet ABM cheating even if chaff testing were permitted.

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