

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

Date: 22 FEB 2012 Authority: EO 13526

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MDR: 12-M-1580

15 SEP 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: SALT

I believe we are heading for serious international and domestic political problems if the trend in SALT continues. We will reach an outcome which would be interpreted by our allies and the Congress as a sign of U.S. weakness and Soviet strength. The consequence will be a dramatic loss of U.S. influence and a gain in Soviet influence.

The fundamental problem is that we have on the table a U.S. drafted "interim" offense proposal which freezes in a Soviet advantage of about 650 ballistic missiles, including 288 missiles larger than any U.S. counterpart, based on the most recent intelligence reports. The Soviets have 29 Y Class SSBNs now afloat, each with 16 missile launching tubes. Twelve more are under construction. When these are completed the Soviet Y Class force will equal our SSBN force of 41 ships. Their total number of sub-based launchers will then exceed ours by about 100. They have the capability also by 1975-77 of overcoming the last U.S. strategic advantage in missiles, that of total number of warheads on target. Thus, such a freeze could undermine U.S. sufficiency and parity.

This is weakly offset by a U.S. proposed advantage in ABM interceptors which has now shrunk from 200 to 100. It is also mitigated by the assertion that the offense proposal is "interim," to be replaced by a more equitable offense agreement at a later date. But the only clear inducement we have for the Soviets to negotiate such a follow-on agreement is the threat of withdrawing from the ABM agreement. The history of Congressional opposition to SAFEGUARD and the prospect of even stronger Congressional opposition to U.S. withdrawal from an ABM agreement once signed weaken the credibility of this inducement.

With a highly inequitable U.S. offense proposal on the table we are proceeding to perfect a more nearly equitable defense agreement. When the latter is negotiated we can expect heavy domestic pressure to sign it.

For some time I have been expressing these concerns to Dr. Kissinger and recommending actions to improve the situation, as the attached summary will show.

Downgraded to Secret
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I am deeply convinced that our most immediate goal in SALT must be to reverse the growing Soviet advantage in offensive arms while limiting or reducing ABM defenses of Soviet cities, in order to maintain clear U.S. sufficiency. The major lever we have on the Soviets is our ABM program. It is, moreover, essential that we defend our retaliatory forces until we are assured the projected threat to them is reduced. We must make sure that we keep this lever credible by retaining the right to defend our retaliatory forces until we have a satisfactory agreement controlling offensive weapons.

I therefore recommend:

a. That Ambassador Smith be instructed to spell out in the strongest possible terms the deep concern of the U.S. Government with the continued Soviet offensive build-up in both land and submarine based offensive missiles and that we expect Soviet cooperation in SALT VI in finding a solution to this problem.

b. That Ambassador Smith be instructed to inform the Soviets before the close of SALT V that we must hear their proposals for an interim offense agreement at the start of SALT VI, before we will be able to move further towards an ABM agreement.

c. That highest priority be given to the formulation of U.S. strategy and tactics for SALT VI to reverse the growing Soviet advantage in offensive arms while limiting or reducing ABM defenses of Soviet cities.



Attachment

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ATTACHMENT

X3242 My memorandum of 7/12/71 to Dr. Kissinger urged that the offense proposal in NSDM-117 be made more equitable.

-Y3312 Y3342
NSDM-120 reaffirmed the NSDM-117 provisions.

Y3060 My memorandum of 8/2/71 to you urged that we take advantage of the Soviet statement of willingness to work towards an ABM ban, to move towards a more equitable offense arrangement.

The decision was made to leave discussion of an ABM ban until after a first ABM and offense agreement has been reached.

On 8/19/71, on receipt of the Delegation plan to fall back from 3 SAFEGUARD sites to 2 sites, I urged through our respective staffs and the Backstopping Committee that the fallback be made clearly dependent upon Soviet acceptance of all other defense and offense provisions.

The decision was made to present the fallback without clear condition.

Y3067 My memorandum of 9/4/71, written after the Soviets rejected the inclusion of submarine launched missiles in the interim offense agreement, urged that we insist on full discussion of offense provisions before proceeding further with defense, to make clear to the Soviets that our acceptance of any ABM agreement was firmly coupled to their acceptance of a corresponding offense agreement.

The decision was to continue negotiation of an ABM agreement.

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