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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

ERW

November 12, 1977

(18)

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

ALSO:

THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY
THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
THE DIRECTOR, ARMS CONTROL AND
DISARMAMENT AGENCY
THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The attached three papers are circulated to support the discussion at the SCC Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 16, at 3:00 p.m. in the White House Situation Room. These papers are: (1) an agenda; (2) a discussion paper for agenda item 3; (3) a State Department paper on consultations with the Allies.

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: 12 FEB 2016

Christine Dodson
Christine Dodson
Staff Secretary

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

SCC MEETING

Wednesday, November 16

3:00 p.m.

Enhanced Radiation and MBFR

1. Report on status of MBFR negotiations (Ambassador Resor)
2. Briefing on Enhanced Radiation Program (Dept. of Energy)
3. US approach to decision on enhanced radiation warheads.
 - a. Report on status of consultations with Allies (Dept. of State)
 - b. US approach to further consultations
 - c. US preference with regard to production/deployment of enhanced radiation warheads (see attached discussion paper).
4. Potential effects of enhanced radiation warhead production/deployment on the MBFR talks (SCC MBFR Working Group paper)
5. Options for linking enhanced radiation warhead production/deployment to the MBFR negotiations (SCC MBFR Working Group paper)

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DISCUSSION PAPER

ENHANCED RADIATION WARHEADS

This paper is an NSC staff contribution to support SCC discussion of the US approach to the ER issue. It outlines considerations that bear on a final decision, and raises associated questions for SCC discussion.

Considerations

1. Military Utility. It is generally agreed that ER warheads provide a militarily useful option in the event deterrence fails. Owing to the enhanced radiation mechanism, ER warheads can produce equivalent prompt radiation damage at smaller yields than standard nuclear warheads can. Hence, targets susceptible to radiation effects can be destroyed with less collateral heat and blast damage to the surrounding area. In this regard, ER warheads are superior to both the weapons they replace and alternative systems based on standard nuclear warhead technology.

-- How important is the military advantage of ER warheads over standard nuclear warheads in the European environment?



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-- Are we certain that ER warheads would not lower the nuclear threshold appreciably? If not, would the attendant increased risk of nuclear escalation be offset by the corresponding increase in deterrence of war and in the ability to control escalation should it occur?

3. Mini-Nukes and the Conventional/Nuclear Distinction. The 8" and Lance ER warheads are powerful nuclear weapons, the magnitudes of their explosive effects are in no way comparable to conventional weapons. Contrary to some fears, they would not blur the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons and they would not change the requirement for Presidential control over the release of nuclear weapons.

4. Need for Modernization. The existing 8" warhead is in need of modernization: it is aging, must be assembled in the field through a time consuming process, has short range, and is not ballistically matched to conventional 8" ammunition.

-- If the ER program were cancelled, would it be possible to obtain political support for 8" modernization with standard warhead design?

-- Would failure to proceed with modernization be seen as a fundamental change in NATO nuclear strategy, i.e. a de-emphasis of the battlefield nuclear option?

5. Priorities. Through such programs as the NATO Long-Term Defense Program, the US is currently emphasizing to NATO the need to improve the conventional leg of the NATO Triad deterrent. Simultaneously, the Allies are concerned about a perceived need to improve NATO's capability to strike deep into Pact territory with nuclear forces stationed in the theater (perhaps cruise missiles).

-- Will a decision to proceed with ER undercut US efforts to improve conventional forces and decrease reliance on nuclear weapons?

-- Will the Allies interpret a decision to proceed with ER as seriously inconsistent with their perceived need for improvements in longer-range systems?

6. Public Perceptions. The political difficulties with ER are due largely to (1) a public misperception that the weapon is a revolutionary, rather than evolutionary, development in nuclear weapons technology ("kills people, but leaves buildings intact"), and (2) public concerns with the radiation kill mechanism -- the "inhumanity" of radiation deaths or lingering effects of non-lethal radiation doses. These perceptions have created a serious political problem in Europe and around the world, as well as in the US.

-- Are these perception problems a serious political obstacle to ER production and deployment?

-- If so, can they be overcome with a public education campaign? How?

7. Relations with Congress. At the behest of the President the Congress has authorized and appropriated funds for ER warheads, in spite of the political problems with ER.

-- What would be Congressional reactions to decisions (1) to produce, (2) not to produce or (3) to link production or deployment to arms control.

-- Are there ways to minimize any adverse effects of such reactions.

8. Allied Support The Allies wish, in greater or lesser degree, that the issue would go away. They have delayed in giving us an official position. While their military experts are attracted to the weapon, their politicians fear a backlash against nuclear weapons in

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general from its deployment. They continue to prefer us to decide on production and then consult with them on deployment, despite our assertions that we cannot split production and deployment. More recently, Chancellor Schmidt and others in Germany have been talking publicly about some linkage between ER and arms control, most often MBFR. That has taken the form of saying that the Allies should not forego ER without getting something in return; that may reflect, in part, a sense that we are backing away from the weapon.

-- What are the chances that we can obtain substantial Allied public support for whatever decision is taken?

-- What more needs to be done to build a basis of support in Europe for whatever decision is eventually taken?

9. Effects on Arms Control. The SCC Working Group paper on ER and MBFR discusses the possible effects of ER decisions on the MBFR negotiations. The Arms Control Impact Statement (ACIS) on ER argues that any effect on arms control would be marginally negative. However, since the July publication of the ACIS, much has occurred. Hence, some serious questions must be reviewed.

-- How would a decision one way or the other affect the chances to reach a CTB or SALT agreement on the one hand, and to obtain Senate ratification on the other hand?

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