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OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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~~SECRET (XGDS) (2)~~

June 6, 1977

7 JUN 1977

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MEMORANDUM FOR

- The Vice President
- The Secretary of State
- The Secretary of Defense
- The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
- The Director of Central Intelligence
- The Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
- The Director, Office of Management and Budget

6/7  
 ✓ CD- My bias towards trying for a complete agreement given reasonable venturism. Agreement is in reach may be very hard. Father to reach it would give us a better chance than we have now to improve our own arm capability.  
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SUBJECT: SCC Meeting, PRM 27

Attached is the Agenda and the response to PRM/NSC-27: Chemical Warfare to be used as the basis for the SCC Meeting, Wednesday, June 8, 1977 at 10:00 a.m.

Office of the Secretary of Defense  
 Chief, RDD, ESD, WIIS  
 Date: 01 Jul 2016 Authority: EO 13526  
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*Christine Dodson*  
 Christine Dodson  
 Staff Secretary

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 Authority: EO 13526  
 Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
 Date: JUL 01 2016

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RESPONSE TO PRM/NSC-27:

CHEMICAL WARFARE

(Working group approved draft;

June 1, 1977)

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SUMMARY

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Current US policy on chemical weapons has two aspects. First, as a party to the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the United States is legally bound not to use chemical weapons first in war. However, the United States has long reserved the right to retaliate in kind if an enemy initiates the use of chemical weapons. For this purpose, a chemical retaliatory capability has been maintained.

Secondly, the US is firmly committed to the objective of complete and effective prohibition of chemical weapons. To this end the US is participating in bilateral consultations with the USSR and in multilateral discussions at the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) in Geneva. The present US-USSR consultations stem from the July 1974 summit meeting in Moscow, at which it was agreed to seek agreement on a joint initiative at the CCD on chemical weapons limitations. To date, however, no decision has been taken on the nature of limitations the US should seek.

Trends in both military capabilities and arms control discussions have made a decision on the future course of US chemical weapons policy increasingly important. The US capability to retaliate in kind has declined to a level considered marginal by DOD and continues to decline.

While our knowledge of Soviet offensive capabilities is not very precise, it seems clear that they continue to possess a substantial chemical capability, which poses a significant threat to NATO. Past attempts to obtain Congressional approval for

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Impediments in the US retaliatory capability have been unsuccessful. At the same time the continued lack of a negotiating position has resulted in increasing political costs.

The two basic questions at present are (1) What military posture should the US have for deterring chemical attack (and for retaliation if deterrence fails) until an acceptable arms control agreement is either achieved or proves unattainable?

(2) What arms control approach to chemical weapons would best serve U.S. security interests?

This study presents two basic strategies for deterring chemical attack and retaliating if deterrence fails. Both strategies are consistent with national security. Strategy 2, which relies on a declining chemical stockpile, involves greater risk because of its increasing nuclear dependence while Strategy 1, which modernizes the chemical stockpile, reduces the risks associated with such dependence. If neither strategy is selected, the CW retaliatory stockpile will continue to erode without the policy guidance necessary to permit compensatory realignment of military strategy and programs with policy. Retention of a CW retaliatory capability complements CW arms control effects by prudently providing for national and allied security pending attainment of acceptable agreements and by providing a strengthened negotiating position.

There are four options available to the US for deterring employment of chemical weapons in the period until an effective CW agreement is reached:

1. Adopt Strategy 1 now in order to provide a security hedge while negotiations are in progress and, in the view of so

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provide bargaining leverage.

2. As a policy decision, adopt Strategy 1, proceed with the establishment of a binary facility, but defer a production decision pending progress in negotiations.

3. Adopt Strategy 2, but review this policy periodically in the light of progress of CW negotiations, beginning with the start of the FY 1980 budget cycle in mid-1978.

4. Adopt Strategy 2, recognizing that regardless of outcome of negotiations, U.S. offensive CW capabilities will drop to nil by 19<sup>9</sup>0.

This study outlines both comprehensive and non-comprehensive approaches to chemical weapons arms control. Under a comprehensive approach the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons would be banned and existing stockpiles destroyed. While development of chemical agents and weapons would be prohibited, there would be no restriction on improvements on one's protective measures in order to reduce the effectiveness and therefore the attractiveness of a chemical attack.

There are a variety of possible limitations on CW-related activities which might form elements of a non-comprehensive approach. These elements are not mutually exclusive and could be combined in a number of ways. Based on security, verification and negotiability considerations, the most important are: (a) agreed deployment limitations; (b) a ban on production of CW agents and precursors; (c) a CW non-assistance agreement; and a ban on open-air testing.

Generally, a comprehensive arms control approach has greater potential benefits than does a non-comprehensive approach. A comprehensive approach would probably be broadly acceptable to the USSR, to US allies and the non-aligned. A non-comprehensive approach would, at best, be much less acceptable. A comprehensive approach would also better serve US foreign policy interests.

Relative judgments about verifiability are more difficult to make. While prohibition or limitation of some types of chemical warfare activities can be verified dependably with appropriate inspection rights, it would not be possible to verify all aspects of a CW agreement with confidence. In view of the traditional Soviet reluctance to accept on site inspection as a supplement to [REDACTED] intrusive verification arrangements may be difficult to negotiate.

Under present circumstances prospects are poor for obtaining the Congressional and/or allied cooperation needed to improve chemical capabilities. (While the NATO allies share our concern about the Soviet CW threat, they appear reluctant to consider any expansion or dispersal of our European stockpile.) If a concerted effort to reach a CW arms control agreement proves unsuccessful these conditions may change.

Both military strategies, as well as both arms control approaches, envision continued improvements in US/NATO capabilities to protect forces against a chemical attack. Such improvements represent an essential component of any approach to enhancing U.S. security in the CW field.