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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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22 APR 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: ALCMs on Aircraft other than Heavy Bombers

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Having given further thought to this issue, I now suggest that any new proposal not include a provision barring ALCMs of range greater than 600km from aircraft other than heavy bombers.

Using the 2500km range across the board as a line of demarcation between strategic and other applications of cruise missiles makes sense from a military point of view and gives our position an important simplicity in presentation and negotiation. Moreover, a single limit, though not solving the verification problems with cruise missiles (different ranges with different payloads, nature of payload) at least does not make them more difficult.

The other-than-heavy bomber provision introduces a potentially controversial complexity, the rationale for which appears largely historical. In a sense, the provision is a survivor of the period when the idea was to have as many 600km-like categories as possible and to treat longer ranges as specially justified exceptions.

As I have indicated earlier, a 600km limit could be advantageous to the US with respect to the Backfire problem, by barring an easy means of range extension and penetration of a modest US air defense. However, Soviet adherence to a 600km limit would be practically unverifiable. The same limitation might be obtained through a more specific collateral constraint, applicable only to Backfire.

On the other hand, the 600km limitation would have considerable potential adverse impact on US and Allied use of cruise missiles:

-- First, if applied to "armed" CMs, it would bar employment of Tomahawk-style cruise missiles from aircraft in conventional roles (e.g., anti-ship). Though anti-ship use at ranges of 2500km are at present greatly limited by targeting capability, this will not always be the case. To avoid such a prohibition, substitution of "nuclear armed" for "armed" would be required in defining cruise missiles.

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-- Second, even for theater nuclear roles, other-than-heavy bomber aircraft offers mobility, flexibility, and easy dispersal without the range requirements of sea-basing or the "public interface"

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problems of GLCMs. At present we know very little about how, if at all, we would use CMs for theater nuclear roles: That counsels against foreclosing a platform option except for very good reason. At the very least, the backdoor restriction on FBS will be of some concern to the Allies.

In short, the case for the 600km provision seems weak, it poses some substantive military and Alliance problems, and it could create difficulties both for negotiation and for ratification.

I have come to these views despite the nonsensical charges in a column earlier this week about the treatment of this issue at the Moscow meetings.

Harold Brown

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