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Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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6 SEP 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Bomber Variants (U)

X 2487

(75) The President recently signed decision minutes which include the following outcome on the question of bomber variants and reductions in the SNDV aggregate:

- If the Soviets would accept 2160 as the SNDV level, no bomber variants would count;
- If the Soviets would accept 2220, only the approximately 60 rapidly convertible Bison tankers and Bear ASW aircraft would count.
- Presumably at SNDV levels above 2220, all 110 would count (i.e., including the approximately 50 Bear reconnaissance aircraft which would take a period of months to convert).

(76) I believe that this outcome is not in the US interest and that this question should be reexamined for the following reasons:

- We should not pay for reductions, which are beneficial to both sides; even more so, we should not pay by counting rules -- indeed, at lower SNDV levels, marginally available forces become more, not less significant.
- No doubt we will eventually make some adjustment in our bomber variant position, especially as to the 50 reconnaissance Bears. But, I believe that concession would be better traded for some points about bombers we want, e.g., the right to designate ALCM carriers unilaterally, than in the context of reductions.

(77) Accordingly, I believe that this decision should be reexamined on its merits at the National Security Council meeting on September 6 and not conveyed to the Soviets until after such reconsideration.

(U) The foregoing is consistent with the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

*Harold Brown*

Copy furnished:  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

380-80-0017, Box 82, USSR 388.3 (18 Aug - Oct) 1977

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