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SALT



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT  
SUBJECT: JCS Assessment of SALT

*TK Paper*

The JCS have conducted an assessment of the emerging SALT II agreement, the conclusions of which are stated in the attached JCS Memorandum and its Annex.

In summary, the Joint Chiefs' assessment is that -- assuming certain specific issues (discussed below) are dealt with favorably -- "SALT II (is) a modest but useful framework which gives the United States flexibility to regain ultimate strategic parity, but it is by no means a risk-free panacea nor a substitute for modernization programs." They note their preference for "more extensive mutual reductions and constraints than SALT II will impose," and their concern at the failure of SALT II to reduce Soviet heavy ICBMs or include Backfire within the SNDV aggregate. They warn that Soviet programs will continue even with SALT and that "primarily as a consequence of actions and inactions extending back at least a decade, essential equivalence will be lost in the early 1980's, with or without the emerging SALT agreement." They call for "longer-term resolve to avoid the mistakes of previous years, ... which have brought the nation to the certain prospect of strategic inferiority," and for "prompt and resolute action to arrest, and ultimately reverse, the steady erosion of our relative strategic posture" as "an objective of the highest national priority."

USSR 388.3

They raise the possibility of "restructuring the treaty" but recognize that this is not a feasible course. They also note the calls by some for disapproving it so that "the American public can be 'shocked' out of ... complacency and induced to support the necessary measures to restore parity." The JCS reject this approach, concluding instead that "the more appropriate course" is regarding SALT "in a balanced and realistic perspective" as a "modest but useful framework" that gives us the necessary flexibility to carry out the programs to restore the balance.

My own assessment parallels that of the JCS in most respects, though I do not believe the US faces the prospect of certain

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strategic inferiority. In particular, I strongly share the view that the US must recognize that the prospective SALT II agreement is not a basis for complacency, but rather an occasion for resolve to do what is needed to meet the challenges we face. We must not risk falling into the trap of believing that SALT II will relieve us of the unpleasant necessity to expand our strategic programs to maintain parity with the USSR in strategic forces -- even if the Soviets merely carry out the programs they now have underway. I believe the principal benefits of the Treaty lie: in its prevention of still greater problems resulting from Soviet buildup that would go further than its present programs in numbers and in new types; in the Treaty's contribution (through the RV limitations) to the feasibility of more survivable basing for our ICBMs; and in maintaining the process by which we can seek more significant future limits. Thus, I believe that the SALT II treaty will provide a moderately better military situation for the US than no treaty, if we do take the appropriate steps, which SALT II permits, to build up our strategic forces.

In my own assessment, I would also add a factor not explicitly addressed by the JCS: A refusal to sign (assuming outstanding issues, especially related to verification, can be resolved) or a Senate rejection would, I think, critically damage the international standing of the US, in addition to its negative effects on US-Soviet relations.

I fully agree that we must, in our efforts to gain support for the Treaty, avoid exaggerating its benefits, or minimizing the problems we will face even with it, and that we must match our efforts to secure for support for SALT with resolution to carry out necessary programs to correct the problems it will not solve.

I also share -- and welcome -- the implicit JCS judgment that "restructuring" the agreement on major issues is not feasible, however desirable such action might be, and that resort to the alleged energizing shock effect of rejection is inappropriate -- and, I would add, very dangerous.

Verification. The Annex includes a detailed discussion of the JCS' views on verification of the agreement. They note that the prohibitions on interference and deliberate concealment mean that "the United States is better able to monitor Soviet military activities, particularly those relating to strategic systems," and they call attention to the utility of the data base's provision of indicators of strategic force levels. They conclude that "We have reasonable confidence in our ability to monitor certain important areas where Soviet cheating may take

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place," but they warn of the uncertainties in monitoring covert deployment of MIRVed SLBMs in Delta- I and II SSBNs, mobile ICBMs, SS-16 production, and cruise missile characteristics and internal ALCM deployment.

The JCS do not make an overall assessment of the significance of these uncertainties or their acceptability. I agree of course that any Soviet cheating would be a matter of the gravest concern, whatever its direct military significance, but I believe that an assessment of the acceptability of the monitoring uncertainties listed must take into account the significance of cheating in these areas for the military balance, the desirability of US flexibility in certain of the areas involved (including notably mobile ICBMs and cruise missiles), and the potential of US programs (including R&D hedges) for response to violations on a scale large enough to affect the balance. Measured by that standard, which I consider the appropriate one, I believe the agreement is adequately verifiable. That is, undetected cheating could not be on a large or broad enough scale to affect our security.

My conclusion depends heavily, of course, on the assumption that we will maintain present monitoring capability, restore as soon as possible the collection capacity lost with the closure of the Iranian sites, and maintain the vigorous procurement, development and research programs needed to have adequate responses to detected violations; adequate measures to provide readiness to respond to detected Soviet cheating or breakout are a separate matter from the programs needed to maintain strategic equivalence in the face of overt Soviet efforts. My conclusion also depends on the proposition that the US will be prompt to protest Soviet actions that give rise to uncertainty; we need not be able to prove Soviet violation beyond a reasonable doubt within the US Government to be justified in raising an issue with the Soviets.

All these factors are also identified by the JCS. The JCS annex stresses the importance of adequate monitoring capability to verification -- and to the overall problem of monitoring Soviet military developments not limited by SALT. They also call for US efforts to gain Soviet agreement to an increased role for cooperative measures for SALT verification. (Their position with respect to the still-unresolved issue of telemetry encryption is described below.)

Modernization Programs. Contrary to widespread charges, the JCS do not condition their attitude toward SALT II on a commitment by you to MX or any other specific program. They do, however, particularly in the annex, make clear that both the strategic

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balance and future arms control are related to our programs. They note that "the existence of SALT aggregate limits and sublimits reduces the level of uncertainty in projecting the future Soviet force structure, allowing the United States to better formulate the necessary modernizations." The Five Year Defense Program for 1980-84 -- which includes full pre-deployment work on MX (including initial procurement funds) and Trident II -- contains, they conclude, "programs which, if followed through, would ameliorate the adverse trends in the strategic balance" but they warn that "deletions or slippages" would pose serious risks to our national security. They call for "modernization programs across the full spectrum of military capability," including "deployment of MX in a survivable basing mode, improvements in SSBNs and SLBMs, modernization of the air-breathing leg of the Triad beyond the deployment of B-52 ALCM carriers, and aggressive R&D programs" as well as modernized C<sup>3</sup>. They point out that our leverage in SALT III will be determined in large part by our programs.

The JCS stress that an adequate and increased US strategic forces program will be necessary with or without SALT II. However, I do not regard the JCS statements on the importance of, and the need for, the modernization programs discussed as conditioning their attitude toward SALT II on an express commitment by you to MX, Trident II, a new bomber, or any other particular program. However, I fully agree with the stress they place on the need to increase our efforts in strategic forces even with a SALT agreement, if we are to maintain (the JCS would say "reestablish") essential equivalence. My view is that the increase necessary would be even greater in the absence of SALT II.

Specific Issues. In addition to these overall judgments, the JCS address a number of specific points.

First, they list a number of "ambiguities" which "unless ... favorably resolved before the treaty is signed" will mean "SALT II cannot be considered to serve the national security interest." These are:

-- Explicit Soviet acknowledgement that the maximum number of RVs tested on Soviet MIRVed ICBMs is for the SS-17 -- 4, for the SS-18 -- 10, and for the SS-19 -- 6. I agree that such acknowledgement is desirable, and, indeed, I believe we may need additional clarity to deal with the uncertainty recently created with respect to the maximum capacity of the SS-18 Mod 4.

-- Access to unencrypted telemetry that is essential for verification. Recent Soviet statements on this subject incline me to the belief that we will need to secure additional Soviet

agreement in the area of telemetry. I am still considering this issue and will make my specific recommendations at the forthcoming SCC meeting.

-- Protocol not precedential. Recognizing the impracticality at this stage of dropping the Protocol entirely, the JCS warn that "extending Protocol limitations on SLCM and GLCM without suitable Soviet concessions would be very harmful to Western security," and call for a Presidential declaration that "no restrictions in the Protocol will be precedential." I agree with both the assessment of the dangers of extending the Protocol and the utility, both in the US and with our allies, of a statement by you -- repeating the position taken by our negotiators -- that its provisions are not precedential.

-- Non-circumvention. Urging that the non-circumvention clause must not "interfere with our options to share with our NATO allies the technology required to counter the Soviet long-range theater nuclear threat," the JCS call for a Presidential declaration of our policy. The US has already agreed to present to the Senate and to NATO an authoritative statement of our interpretation of the non-circumvention clause. I think it appropriate that that statement be endorsed by you in the document transmitting the Treaty to the Senate for its consideration.

-- MX basing. The JCS call for a Presidential declaration embodying the US interpretation that SALT II will not bar deployment of MX "in an appropriate multiple protective structure (MPS) mode." While I am not yet ready to make a recommendation on the basing mode issue, I agree that it must be the position of the US that SALT II does not foreclose the MPS option, subject of course to the requirement that any new system, US or Soviet, must be so designed as to be adequately verifiable. It would, I believe, be useful for you explicitly to repeat that interpretation, either in your transmittal document or, as suggested in the Annex, before signature.

-- Outstanding issues. The Annex to the JCS paper stresses the need to resolve all the outstanding issues, but the JCS identify the following three issues as those of "greatest concern" to them:

- "The armed definition of ALCM (should) not be allowed to be applied to GLCMs and SLCMs, except as the United States has specified in the Protocol." After the Protocol expires, the Treaty provides no limits on GLCMs and ALCMs. The US has made explicit in the negotiations that our agreement to the "armed" definition for ALCMs for the entire treaty period does

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not constitute a precedent for possible future limits on GLCMs and SLCMs. Our formulation of the definitions would re-enforce our position. I fully endorse the JCS position, but I believe no further action is required provided the Soviets accept our formulations.

• "UPVs should not be included in SALT." I understand from Secretary Vance that Amb. Dobrynin has indicated Soviet agreement with the US position on UPVs. This should promptly be confirmed through the Delegations in Geneva.

• "ICBM new type limits should be constrained so there truly would be only one new type." We must, I agree, insure that the Soviets are not permitted both a modern successor to the SS-11 non-MIRVed system in the guise of a modification of an existing missile and a new 10-RV MIRVed successor to the SS-17 and SS-19. This issue is still under negotiation and we should be appropriately cautious in any relaxation of our position that reductions (as well as increases) in characteristics be limited to 5%. We should also recognize that Soviet objections to including additional parameters in the limited category, in combination with their insistence on greater than 5% "downside" flexibility, may well relate to seeking to avoid having to choose between a modernized single-RV missile and a 10-RV light ICBM.

Finally, the JCS request an opportunity to meet with you and me to discuss these issues before final action is taken on consummation of a SALT agreement. I strongly endorse that request, and I hope we can meet with the Chiefs during the coming week, before you make final decisions on the outstanding issues.

*Harold Brown*

Attachment

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