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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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Office of the Secretary of Defense **SUSC. § 552**
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MDR: **TS -M- 1648**

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: SALT

The attached memo states the views of the JCS on current SALT issues. As General Brown's cover memo notes, their positions on these and other issues were known to you when you made your decisions in the course of the September talks.

As I advised you in my 6 October memo, it is my personal view that their substantive concerns have been adequately reflected in your positions, though not always in the precise ways the JCS (or I, for that matter) would have preferred, had the U.S. been able to dictate, rather than negotiate the terms of the agreement. The present JCS statement first states their view on the degree to which their concerns have been accommodated. It goes on to review the critical outstanding issues on which acceptance of Soviet positions would be strongly adverse to our interests.

General concerns.

1. Overall Levels. The JCS stress that (because of the greater proportions of MIRV systems in US forces and programs, and the lack of a new US non-MIRV, non-ALCM system) the 1200/2160 combination will require that the US depart somewhat from current programs to reach the 2160 level. This is an important problem and I believe it has been recognized consistently in our deliberations. We can maintain the 2160 level by retaining older forces (Titan II, Polaris) -- though at considerable cost and with relatively low marginal benefit. As we consider our strategic policy under an agreement, we will need to decide whether on military and/or on political/perception/leverage grounds we need a new non-MIRV system or systems to fill out the permitted SNDV aggregate. In making that decision, the technical possibilities, their costs and military utilities -- which the JCS advise they have under study -- will be an important consideration.

2. ALCM Range. The JCS stress their view that an increased ALCM range will be required in the post-Protocol period, even without "dramatic" Soviet air defense improvements. Different opinions on

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the effect of establishing our definition of cruise missile range, the likely pace of Soviet air defense improvements, and the prospects of significant air defense limits in SALT III obviously influence this issue. However, the basic principle -- that we need to be free to have longer ranges in the future -- is protected by our position, under which the 2500 km range limits on ALCM are for the period of the Protocol only. I fully agree that in this context as in others, as the JCS stress, a provision which is tolerable in the Protocol would pose very serious questions if regarded as a precedent for later agreements.

3. ALCM Flexibility. The JCS note that increasing the ALCM heavy bomber (AHB) force beyond the "set aside" would require difficult choices between additional AHBs and full adherence to our current MIRV expansion programs, and they state their view that imposition of the 820 limit on MIRVed ICBMs (MICBMs) does not "adequately counterbalance" the proposed treatment of AHB. Clearly these are issues of judgment. In my own view, the AHB position gives us adequate flexibility. (And I would not agree that reducing MM III or Poseidon to increase numbers of ALCM-carrying aircraft, whether B-52s or other aircraft, would be appropriately described as "phasing out of newer US strategic systems while older systems are retained in the force.") Moreover, in my view the MICBM limit adds a significant new category of sublimit, holds the Soviet MICBM force below estimated levels, and substitutes an agreed limit for an intelligence prediction of the size of this most threatening element of the Soviet force. Therefore, I believe, the MICBM sublimit helps attain US arms control objectives in ways that cannot be ignored in measuring the acceptability of the limits on US forces, including AHBs.

4. Cruise Missiles (GL/SLCMs). The JCS underscore the serious problems for US and Alliance interests in theater nuclear forces of any impression that the Protocol's severe limits on GL/SLCM limits would permanently limit Allied options for improvement of TNF. I fully agree with these observations, but I would add that the apparent Soviet acceptance of our position on testing gives us the options we need. I would also add that we must, with our Allies, vigorously pursue political, military, and arms control decisions on this matter. By so doing we can take advantage of these opportunities which we have held open, either to deploy an appropriate Allied medium range force or to constrain by agreement the corresponding Soviet forces.

5. ICBM Vulnerability and Mobile ICBMs. With respect to the Protocol ban on mobile ICBMs, the JCS again express their concern at possible precedential effects. I share their view that we should continue to keep the mobile ICBM option open. I would note that the agreement terms we are now seeking to work out would be fully consistent with this position because they would explicitly recognize that mobiles would be permitted once the Protocol expires, unless the parties affirmatively decide otherwise.

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6. Backfire. The JCS reaffirm their consistent view that "the Backfire should be counted in the SNDV aggregate," and state that "none of the 'assurances' under consideration in the current approach would be adequate to insure that Backfire could not be used against the United States in time of war." As in prior statements on the subject, they call attention to the potential of the aircraft to increase substantially the Soviet megatonnage available against the US, if the Backfire were employed entirely for CONUS missions. They also observe that the Backfire's potential assumes still greater significance at the lower SNDV level we hope to achieve in the future.

I agree that the Backfire is a matter of serious concern and that the preferable result would be to count it in the aggregate -- which remains our formal JDT position. Any future judgment that this preferred result is not essential will rest, of course, on the specificity and character of the assurances the Soviets offer. As I have stated earlier, on balance, I believe a firm production rate limit and other assurances will meet the basic concern that Backfire not "run free," but the points the JCS make underscore the importance of the issue.

Outstanding Issues.

Turning to the current negotiations, the JCS, despite these concerns, state that they "believe -- as communicated earlier to [the Secretary of Defense] and to the President -- that the agreements reached with Gromyko in September provide the basis for concluding a workable SALT II agreement." They stress, however, the importance of avoiding erosion of critical US stands or agreement to unacceptable positions the Soviets have taken on a number of outstanding issues. Broadly, I agree with their positions on these issues. In that connection, they identify:

a. Proposals to adopt a "type rule" rather than an aircraft-by-aircraft rule for defining AHBs: As you know, the SCC has directed the preparation of language designed to meet both our verification concerns that units not distinguishable from each other be similarly counted and our concern that the equipping of limited numbers of B-52s (or other aircraft selected for the purpose) not result in counting large numbers of related but non-ALCM equipped aircraft as AHBs.

b. Soviet proposal to ban "development" of cruise missiles capable of ranges in excess of 2,500 km. I agree that it is essential that our development work on longer-range cruise missiles not be inhibited in significant ways, given our potential long-term need for longer stand-off distances. Maintaining our definition of "range" is of great importance in this context.

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c. Soviet insistence that they be allowed to deploy the SS-NX-17, SS-NX-18, and Typhoon SLBM in exchange for the US right to deploy Trident I. I share the view that it would be unacceptable to permit Typhoon -- an untested missile -- in return for only the Trident I. The recent instructions to the Delegation on this point are fully consistent with the JCS view -- which I believe is shared by all the SCC members.

d. Soviet attempts to ban transport aircraft as nuclear delivery vehicles, thus eliminating the US option for a wide-body ALCM carrier (CMC). Again I note that there appears to be no dissent among your senior advisors from the proposition that the CMC option must be protected.

e. Continued Soviet resistance to a MIRV ICBM launcher "type" rule. For the future viability of the agreement, it seems to me very important that we adhere strictly to the position that units which cannot meaningfully be distinguished count the same. I would not, in this context, exclude the US offering cooperative measures going beyond NTM to resolve any alleged Soviet doubts about U.S. systems, to avoid the alternative of locking ourselves into inflexible counting rules for CMCs.

f. Soviet intransigence on the bomber variants issue: I believe this issue is of importance also in connection with the bomber and AHB counting issues, and that, however the current variants are treated, we must adequately block such possibilities or incentives for the Soviets to design future "variants" that would not count in the aggregate but could be quickly converted to bomber configuration.

g. Soviet insistence that limitations apply to all armed air-to-surface cruise missiles for the full period of the treaty. Some US and European observers of the NATO scene have also stressed this issue, because of their belief in the longer-term potential of conventional cruise missiles in the European theater.

In sum, the JCS statement underscores the importance of achieving our objectives in the issues they list, as well as meeting their general concerns. Their "outstanding issues" are a subset of the list considered by the SCC; meeting their "general concerns" is a matter of the overall U.S. - USSR strategic balance and our unilateral force structure decisions within SALT restrictions, as well as a matter of the specific provisions of SALT agreements.

Harold Brown

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