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SALT

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

March 27, 1978

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
Date: OCT 05 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: SALT II: Strategy for Completing the Process

The memo by Vance and Paul Warnke have sent (Tab A) outlines a strategy to resolve the remaining SALT issues within the pattern of meetings we now foresee: continued negotiations at Geneva, a Vance trip to Moscow, a Gromyko visit to the US at the time of the SSOD, and a subsequent Summit. The scenario assumes we can achieve a satisfactory resolution of the various issues at the indicated level. Of course if we cannot handle them at the levels indicated, they will have to be discussed, and if possible resolved, at a higher level.

In addition, the strategy outlined makes some implicit assumptions about what is a satisfactory outcome for a number of the issues--and there are no doubt some interagency differences on that.

The JCS have also recently completed a memo (Tab B) stating their views on SALT generally. Looking through this will provide useful background in thinking about the issues that must be decided as we prepare for the final stages.

Substance

I would divide the outstanding issues as follows: Broadly, these relate to the levels proposed to handle them but the correspondence is not identical.

Those issues that are vital militarily, in the sense that a significant departure from our position would prevent our achievement of programs, either forces or of options, that we consider necessary to our strategic posture:

o heavy bomber definition, treatment of bomber variants, ALCM-equipped B-52s, and CMCs (cruise missile carriers). This requires that there be no over-counting of B-52s with ALCMs, that CMC flexibility be assured, and that we have adequate confidence that current and future Soviet "variants" actually have a non-bomber role.

USSR 388.3

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330-81-0212, box 5, USSR 388.3 (Feb-Mar) 1978

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o cruise missile range. This requires an effective launch to target range in operational terms of 2500 km for ALCMs and 600 kms for GL/SLCMs during the Protocol, with subsequent needs to be determined.

o the 120 "gap" before ALCM-carrying heavy bombers count as MIRVs.

On these issues, projected for resolution before the Summit, we must prevail if we are to carry out our critical ALCM program.

Those issues that are vital with our Allies, in the sense that success on them is essential to our efforts to persuade the Allies that we are not sacrificing their interests:

o non-circumvention: acceptance of our "fall-back" formula without any restrictive interpretation inconsistent with what we have told the Allies, thus not allowing the Soviets to split the Allies from us. (Vance in Moscow). Going beyond our "fall-back" on non-circumvention would violate our repeated assurance to the Allies.

o "cruise missile definition," which means confirming there are to be no limits on conventionally armed ALCMs on non-heavy bombers after the Protocol expires. (Summit). In my view, inclusion of limits on conventional CMs after the Protocol expires would seriously undermine our argument that the Protocol holds open cruise missile options and does not set unacceptable precedents. (This is an area of clear inter-agency dispute.)

Those whose resolution, in addition to important military and/or Alliance effect, has a particular impact on ratification, i.e., those that are symbols of who "wins" the negotiations:

o Backfire: The precision and effectiveness of the Soviet obligations in this area--not properly described as merely a "letter"--will strongly affect perceptions of how well we have negotiated. (Summit)

o Remaining verification questions: Clarifications that the MIRV launcher type rule means that, in the future, launchers for single RV missiles must be externally distinguishable from those for MIRVed missiles; stronger assurance against telemetry encryption; and verifiable standards of what modernization of ballistic missiles is banned. Success on these issues will greatly strengthen our ability to demonstrate that the agreement is adequately verifiable. (This issue is not explicitly addressed in the Vance/Warnke memo.)

o Reductions completed before Protocol expires: We cannot afford to lay ourselves open to the argument that the Soviets will try to force extension of the Protocol by being able to delay their reductions to or even past its end. (Summit)

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o The single-RV exception? The question-mark is meant to indicate that while this is another area in which simply agreeing to the Soviet position would appear to be an improper concession, there may be entirely different formulations that could be acceptable. (Vance in Moscow, if possible; if not, Summit).

Finally, those where some splitting of the difference is likely to be acceptable on both substantive and ratification grounds. These include the SNDV aggregate, the Joint Statement, and probably some elements of the "new types" package.

#### Process

The Vance/Warneke memo outlines a method of working through these issues. It is also, implicitly, an assessment of the difficulty of the issues (e.g., CM range definition would be resolvable at Geneva; the aggregates probably must await a Summit). Obviously, only events will show how we can go from issue to issue. We should do what we can at lower levels but if we cannot resolve a "lower level" issue, it will have to be escalated.

To start to implement the overall plan, we should:

o On the Geneva issues, decide on and pass to Paul Warneke the instructions necessary to nail some of these down before Cy Vance goes to Moscow. This requires decisions on cruise missile range definition and on definition of modernization barred by the new types ban. New instructions on bomber definition reflecting your latest guidance have been sent recently.

o For Moscow, decide on the position Cy Vance is to carry on the "new types" and Statement of Principles issues. The others (non-circumvention, timing, Backfire, cruise missile definitions, and aggregates) are covered by instructions that there is no need to reassess.

o Finally, as to a spring Summit, we should recognize that we will have to be ready to modify our game plan if things go worse than we hope. It is important that a Summit dealing with SALT occur only if we are quite sure beforehand that at it we can get an agreement that meets our requirements on equivalence and on ratifiability. If we're not that far this spring, late summer or after the election are alternate targets. This implies we should avoid any public commitment to a SALT-oriented Summit until we have that confidence, i.e., any announcement should be made only after the Vance trip.

I have these specific comments on the scenario:

o I generally agree with the plan to deal at Geneva with the more technical issues (the bomber issues, CM range, and new types-modernization definition). But these include items that are vital militarily; if we can't resolve them there, they will have to go higher.

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o Backfire is projected to be "pre-cooked" in Moscow--i.e., sharpened for decision at the Summit. That is realistic as far as a guess as to where we will reach the final settlement, but I am concerned about the implied suggestion that we will make no progress on this until the Summit. The issue is technically complex as well as politically sensitive, and it is important that we gradually move toward a settlement in a way that will build support as we go. We should not plan to accept a process that will leave this issue where it is now until a Summit.

o The "cruise missile definition" issue, i.e., limits on conventional ALCMs, is shown as a Summit issue. That may reflect an estimate that the Soviets won't yield short of the Summit. But we should try hard to get them to do so, and should be under no illusions that a compromise on our part is possible at any level without severely adverse effects on the Allies and on ratification prospects.

Other Issues

In addition to planning for completion of the negotiations we need to be thinking before signature about an issue that I have raised with you and that the JCS identify in the attached paper--the kind of commitment to strategic programs we will want to make as a means to assure the Senate, the nation, our Allies, and indeed the Soviets, that we will take advantage of the flexibility the agreement will offer. A major ratification issue will be the charge that the Protocol will become permanent. A commitment to particular programs may be important to lend conviction to our position that the Protocol is only an interim measure, that it will not be converted or extended automatically, and that restrictive longer term limits on some of the issues it addresses (e.g., mobiles and cruise missiles) would require limits on the Soviets that go well beyond the limitations placed on them by the Protocol. Such commitments may be important on other issues as well. For example, a relatively modest increase in our air defense force structure could significantly reduce the potential of Backfire both militarily and in terms of ratification.

I raise this issue not to recommend now what the commitments ought to be, but only to call attention to the probability that we will want to make them at about the time the agreement is signed--and to the need to consider what we would say.

I will plan to talk about the substantive SALT issues with the Chiefs later this week, so that their views can be considered in your decisions following your return. It is important to keep the Chiefs involved, particularly as we approach the final decisions that will have to be defended in the ratification process.

*Harold Brown*

Attachments