



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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26 March 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THROUGH: The Under Secretary of Defense (Policy)

SUBJECT: NSC Meeting on START and Nuclear Arms Control; Tuesday, 27 March 1984 at 2 p.m., Cabinet Room,--INFORMATION
MEMORANDUM ~~107~~

~~107~~ This NSC meeting was called to discuss the political context for START and other nuclear arms control negotiations during 1984. It provides an important opportunity for Cabinet-level examination of the hypotheses on which our policy toward the Soviet Union has been based for the past two months.

~~107~~ The most important hypothesis is that an arms control agreement, or even visible progress towards one, would be of major political benefit, almost regardless of the substance of the agreement or the concessions which would be necessary to make progress towards it. In my view, this position is too simplistic. If we fall off our original objective of militarily-significant reductions in START, we make our record during the first three years of the Administration vulnerable to political attack on the grounds that we fruitlessly and needlessly disrupted the SALT process and thereby caused an unnecessary worsening of U. S.-Soviet relations. If we are perceived as begging the Soviets for a SALT 2 1/2 agreement, then our not resubmitting SALT II for Senate ratification becomes indefensible. We should beware of repeating the Carter Administration mistake of believing that a fourth-year policy switch will erase the impression resulting from having followed a different policy during the first three. We are much better off defending what we have been doing than establishing a success criterion--an arms control agreement with the Soviets--which we have not achieved and are unlikely to.

~~107~~ A second hypothesis is that the Soviets will think it is in their interest to negotiate seriously on arms control this year, either because they will not wish to appear obstinate to West European public opinion, or because they fear that a second Reagan Administration would be more difficult to deal with. Again, I believe this hypothesis is wrong. The Soviets behaved fairly crudely in their effort to prevent the reelection last year of West German Chancellor Kohl. Unless they see the President's reelection as inevitable, we must expect them to

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behave similarly now. Certainly, their extreme sensitivity to any hint that U. S.-Soviet relations may be better than they look suggests that they wish to keep the "war and peace" issue front and center during the election campaign.

(S) A final hypothesis--one which is specific to START--is that we can change our START "framework" without making any major concessions in the process. It is important to be clear that the proposed "framework" changes really amount to a giant step back toward SALT II. They signal a willingness to give up any meaningful control on ballistic missile throw-weight, and to negotiate upwards our currently-proposed limit of 5000 ballistic missile RVs. By combining ballistic missiles and bombers, as well as their respective weapons, under single limits, they give up our current distinction between fast- and slow-flying systems, which is to say, the main justification for our original START proposal.

(S) This NSC meeting represents an opportunity to debate these issues as serious political questions, rather than as matters of negotiating tactics and timing.

Richard Perle
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