



RESEARCH AND
ENGINEERING

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

14 APR 1982 17 30 JAD

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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Date: SEP 07 2018

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: M-X Missile Program

(U) Attached is a proposed response to the President's 6 April 1982 letter on the M-X. Also attached, for your information, are point papers from Legislative Affairs on the political situation and a paper from the Air Force which covers some of the questions you raised when we met on Friday.

(U) As you consider this issue, I urge you to recall that the primary objectives we are seeking in our strategic modernization program are to build survivability and endurance into the forces we field to redress the deteriorating strategic balance. Through these actions we hope to maintain a credible deterrent posture and convince the Soviets to begin meaningful arms reduction negotiations.

(U) There are several criteria which I feel a survivable ICBM basing mode should meet.

1. It should blunt the Soviets' ability to further fractionate the large payload capability which they now possess.
2. It should provide a means for prohibiting the Soviets from overwhelming the basing mode with the large number of highly accurate warheads which now exist.
3. It should provide for growth so that survivability and endurance can be maintained as the threat evolves.

(U) I believe that the program which we proposed to the Congress would have produced a solution that met the above criteria in an orderly and well supported manner. It now appears, however, that Congress is demanding that we select a permanent basing mode at a much earlier date. Our response to this has been to propose what the Air Force calls "Dense-Pack" and which I prefer to call "Closely Spaced Basing."

(U) A first order comparison of Closely Spaced Basing to the criteria outlined above results in a favorable conclusion regarding the concept's survivability. It also has the advantage of being compatible with BMD and deceptive basing, options which have the potential for providing significant leverage to the U.S. in comparison to options for growth in the Soviet capabilities.

18-M-1858

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(1) I am concerned, however, that a number of questions need to be answered to determine just how robust the Closely Spaced Basing concept will be in the face of the many critics it will face. I believe we need to spend the next few months examining in detail how we would design our command and control systems and how we would modify our missile design to insure we can fly through the environment we expect to face after an initial attack on the system. We should also look carefully at the Soviets' responses to the system. We need a clear understanding of what modifications they would need to make to their command and control procedures, RV and warhead design, hardness standards and other design parameters. I am particularly interested in understanding and identifying changes that will be difficult for them to make given the comprehensive test ban on atmospheric nuclear testing.

(1) In conclusion, I feel we must face the reality of the Congressional opposition to interim basing and agree to provide the Congress with a permanent basing mode by December. I recommend that our near term efforts be therefore accordingly redirected towards resolution of issues relating to the Closely Spaced Basing concept in order for us to provide as definitive a recommendation as possible in December. I also recommend we so inform the Congress after the appropriate approvals have been obtained from the President.

*I believe there is a
sense of urgency in improving
coverage of the document.*

- Attachments:
TAB A - Memorandum For The President
TAB B - Legislative Affairs Point Papers
TAB C - Air Force Answers to SECDEF Questions

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Coordination:

ASD(LA) BE Harris by telephone 14 Sep 82
Director PA&E Comments provided by David Chen incorporated - see attachment
SA for MX (AFRDA) Alton Cecil, DTG Kelly by telephone 14 Sep 82