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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

#29

1 AUG 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Senior Arms Control Policy Group ASAT Options Paper

(S) Your Senior Arms Control Policy Group, chaired by Bud McFarlane, has completed its evaluation of an array of options for limited bans on anti-satellite weapons. The Executive Summary of that paper adequately conveys the inherent difficulties of each of them. All of the options studied either interfere with your Strategic Defense Initiative or favor the Soviets or raise insurmountable problems of verification. The attached memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (at Tab A) reiterates the importance, among other goals, of not impeding or preventing "research, development, testing, and deployment of systems that make up the Strategic Defense Initiative."

(S) Your March Report to the Congress, which concluded that a comprehensive ban on anti-satellite weapons was not in our interest and could not be verified, remains valid. This conclusion is now broadly shared even in the Congress. (It was, by the way, the Soviet position during negotiations with the Carter administration in 1979!)*

(S) In recognition of the undesirability of a comprehensive anti-satellite ban, attention has shifted to partial bans. This is rather like building half a dam: it may be a good jobs program, but it is bad flood control.

(S) Soviet manipulation of the space issue is aimed primarily at blocking your Strategic Defense Initiative and, only secondarily, at halting our anti-satellite development program. Despite a decade of neglect on our part following the ABM Treaty in 1972, during which the Soviets made significant advances in anti-ballistic missile systems, the U.S. is well poised to explore ballistic missile defense options because of the remarkable development of civilian technology, especially micro-electronics and data processing, both of which are critical to SDI. It is this potential that the Soviets seek to throttle (while they continue, as they have since 1967, to work vigorously to secure an SDI of their own and to buy and steal western technology).

*See the Excerpts from the Soviet statement of May 18, 1979, at Tab B.

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(f) The principal difficulty with embarking on a negotiation broadly drawn to encompass "the militarization of space" is the near impossibility of defining--to say nothing of verifying--the terms of an agreement that would protect our exploration of strategic defense technology. Even if we were to propose a set of exacting, razor-sharp constraints that thread their way through a minefield of undesirable limits on defensive technology, it is certain that the Soviets will broaden the dialogue by tabling a draft treaty that stops everything, verifies nothing, and limits our freedom to act in areas where they know we have great potential benefits to reap from continuing our present R&D.

(f) A U.S. ASAT proposal, however narrow, will legitimize the abstract notion of "halting an arms race in space," and our effort to confine the scope of the negotiation will force us onto the defensive. The matter is further complicated by the fact that virtually any good SDI system we develop will be equally--if not more--effective against satellites. Thus, any proposal to ban anti-satellite systems might also ban desirable SDI answers we will want to pursue. Moreover, it is essential to the protection of our own satellites that we proceed to deploy an ASAT that would enable us to respond in kind to a Soviet attack on them, particularly if such an attack were to occur during a conventional war. The Soviets have that capability today; we do not; with the Soviets knowing that we do not, they might well be tempted to use theirs.

(f) These problems are not overcome by seeking an agreement that would expire before our SDI R&D program violates it. The suggestion that we could reach, say, a five-year agreement confident that we could prepare for, and eventually conduct, prohibited tests when it expires is wishful thinking. Agreements that, however wrongly, are perceived as making the world safer become more, not less popular, with the passage of time. We are still abiding by the SALT I Interim Agreement, even though it expired seven years ago. I can imagine any attempt to proceed with SDI or ASAT after a treaty expires would be labeled as a proposal to "reignite an arms race in space." (The Soviets, on the other hand, will not be troubled by such critics when they are ready to deploy.) The only thing more permanent than a temporary building is an interim agreement.

(f) A better alternative exists. We should go to Vienna, prepared to discuss the Soviet proposal while at the same time making our case for limiting ballistic missiles. We could deal with the Soviet proposal by asking detailed and difficult questions about how they envisage it be verified, how they define certain terms, etc. Interspersed in this discussion we could reiterate that the "militarization" of space began with ballistic missiles, and that ballistic missiles are the systems most urgently in need of arms control.

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(f) With this approach you would not be on the defensive, since you would have instructed our negotiator to explore the Soviet position fully. We would not, however, be burdened with a hard-to-defend, very partial, ASAT ban. You can protect vital U.S. programs by instructing our negotiator to resist any Soviet proposal that would adversely affect your Strategic Defense Initiative.

(f) So I recommend that we continue to make clear our willingness to meet in Vienna, and that we prepare for serious, constructive discussions of the Soviet proposal there. If the Soviets refuse to meet with us unless we adopt their proposed joint statement, their agenda, and their proposed moratorium, I believe the American people and most of our Allies will perceive correctly that Soviet inflexibility and preconditions in this arena, as in START and INF, are the real impediments to progress in arms control. The record of our activity since June 29 can be used to support this.

(f) Incidentally, I very much hope that we will not, under any circumstances, agree to the Soviets dictating who your negotiator should or should not be. Ed Rowley is one of our very best negotiators, which, of course, is why the Soviets are trying to dictate to us that we cannot have him.

Sap.

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