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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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Authority: EO 13526

Chief, Records & Declass Div, WNS

Date: MAY 21 2018

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I-23210/83

11 August 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Through: The Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) *7 I 12 AUG 1983*  
The Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Policy) *STB*

SUBJECT: START End-of-Round Report (Round Four) (U)

*(S)* Based on some reports, one could incorrectly conclude that the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) moved ahead smartly during round four. The round has been described as the "most substantive" and "most significant" to date. In fact, the round was "significant" only because both parties for the first time altered some of their previous positions. U.S. alterations were by far the more substantive and had not been reciprocated at the round's end.

Fundamental Issues

*(S)* Fundamental issues -- those which, if unresolved, would probably bar an agreement -- were no nearer a resolution than one year ago. It was possible by the end of the round, however, to frame those issues more precisely. They are:

- (1) *(S)* Whether to recognize distinctions between ballistic systems and slow-flying systems (heavy bombers, cruise missiles) by way of separate ceilings on each, or simply to aggregate all nuclear delivery vehicles and their weapons under common aggregates;
- (2) *(S)* How, or whether, the imbalance in destructive capability and potential represented by the Soviet advantage in ballistic missile throw-weight will be redressed;
- (3) *(S)* Whether the Soviets will permit any substantial progress in START until the INF issues are resolved.

U.S. Moves

*(S)* The U.S. delegation opened round four with a new mandate of "flexibility." We embodied this flexibility in a draft treaty which we tabled mid-way through the round. Our new flexibility was dictated largely by the Administration's concern to nurture the bipartisan spirit on arms control and defense modernization inspired by the Scowcroft report, and thus to save the M-X. Nonetheless, the U.S. delegation characterized our flexibility as a good faith effort to meet Soviet concerns and move the talks forward.

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Classified by: SecDef Rep to START  
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(S) As diligent students of the U.S. press and Congressional debate, however, the Soviets saw through our tactic. They gave us no credit for meeting any Soviet concerns, even when the actual effect of some U.S. modifications was to move us toward the Soviet position. For example, the Soviets dismissed out of hand our relaxation of the 850 limit on ballistic missiles as intended to do nothing more than accommodate a new small, single warhead missile such as Midgetman, even though the Soviets themselves clearly desire more than 850 ballistic missiles.

(S) The United States also substantially altered its throw-weight position in the wake of intensive internal debate last Spring. OSD had argued to maintain the U.S. objective of redressing the U.S.-Soviet throw-weight disparity. The State Department and administration critics had alleged that throw-weight was "non-negotiable." Compromise (i.e., avoidance of a decision) prevailed. As a result, we took such a flexible position in Geneva that it was almost a non-position. We told the Soviets that our indirect approach of collateral constraints on throw-weight was still on the table -- i.e., sublimits of 2500 ICBM warheads, 210 total medium and heavy ballistic missiles, 110 heavy ballistic missiles. But we also told the Soviets that they could have a choice. If they preferred a direct, aggregate limit on throw-weight, we would be prepared to consider dropping the sublimits. If the Soviets preferred neither approach, we asked them to suggest their own solution to the throw-weight issue. We went so far as to table a treaty which was devoid of any specific throw-weight provisions.

(S) The Soviet response was to continue to insist that throw-weight was a contrived issue and that its introduction as a measure of strategic capability would serve no useful purpose. They dismissed U.S. flexibility on throw-weight as a mask for alleged U.S. attempts to emasculate Soviet ICBM forces.

(S) Formally, it remains our position that the disparity in U.S. and Soviet ballistic missile throw-weight must be corrected. I fear, however, that the Soviets perceive the United States to be less concerned about throw-weight than the U.S. delegation contends. Several Soviets said informally during this round that throw-weight is merely a U.S. political issue and that there is disagreement on its importance even within the United States. The Administration may have unintentionally fostered that assessment by instructing the delegation to leave the draft U.S. treaty blank on throw-weight and to be vague on how we would prefer to resolve the issue. On the other hand, some Soviets privately admitted that U.S. concerns on throw-weight will have to be addressed if there is to be an agreement. It is questionable, however, whether the Soviets will come forward with their own "solution" to the throw-weight issue so long as they see us internally divided on the subject.

(S) Previously the Soviets had criticized our two-phased approach and our position on cruise missiles as an effort to avoid constraints on slow-flying systems until an indefinite second phase. In tabling our draft treaty we directly addressed these criticisms. First,



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-3-

we dropped our earlier two-phased approach in favor of a "single-phased" agreement that would limit heavy bombers and air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) from the outset. Second, we proposed a more restrictive loading limit on ALCMs than SALT II provided. The Soviets nevertheless denigrated our ALCM proposal, together with the lack of SLCM limits, as further evidence of U.S. intentions to "increase massively" the number of strategic weapons rather than to reduce them. On elimination of phases, Karpov once commented informally to Rowny that this was a positive step but otherwise the Soviets ignored it.

#### Soviet Moves

~~(S)~~ Soviet movement during the round was less significant but nevertheless interesting. First, they dropped their proposal to permit no more than four to six Trident/Typhoon SSBNs and to bar deployment of the D-5 SLBM on the Trident. Second, the Soviets said they would be willing to drop their proposed ban on long-range ALCMs, but only if all long-range ground-launched cruise missiles and sea-launched cruise missiles were banned. These two modifications were not surprising, inasmuch as the original Soviet proposals were not credible and their demise was inevitable.

~~(S)~~ Of greater interest were the MIRVed subceilings which the Soviets finally tabled. In earlier rounds they had proposed unspecified subceilings on MIRVed delivery vehicles as in SALT II. In this round the Soviets filled in their blanks: no more than 1200 MIRVed ballistic missiles and ALCM carriers, a reduction of 9% from the level permitted by SALT II; no more than 1080 MIRVed ballistic missiles, down 10% from SALT II; and no more than 680 MIRVed ICBMs, down 17% from SALT II.

~~(S)~~ One cannot draw firm conclusions from these subceilings alone, because the Soviets have yet to table their long-promised limit on the aggregate number of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, in light of the ten-warhead MIRV fractionation limit proposed by the Soviets, their MIRVed subceilings suggest some rather stark conclusions:

(1) ~~(S)~~ The Soviet proposal seems neatly tailored to protect future Soviet force plans. These plans reflect a continuing, perhaps increasing reliance on MIRVed ballistic missiles. Most of the reductions required by the Soviet proposal would come from older, less capable non-MIRVed systems. The Soviets could retain their most highly fractionated ICBMs, including all 308 SS-18s plus substantial numbers of SS-X-24s, and deploy a more heavily MIRVed SLBM force than they have today.

(2) ~~(S)~~ The Soviets may envision an actual increase in their total nuclear weapons. Today they have slightly over 9000 strategic nuclear weapons, [REDACTED]. Their MIRVed subceilings suggest a strategic force of well over 10,000 weapons, perhaps in the range of 11,000 or more. The Soviets have said that their weapons aggregate will be below the current U.S. level, [REDACTED].

Thus the Soviets could increase their weapons and still claim to be "below the current U.S. level."

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OSD 3-3(b)(2)(X)(6) + Section 622(d)



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-4-

(3) (S) Under their proposal the Soviets could easily increase their number of ballistic missile warheads from the 7700 of today to almost 10,000. This suggests that the Soviets would strongly object to what we now describe as the "central element" of our proposal -- the limit of 5000 ballistic missile warheads. The Soviets have in fact said little about the 5000 limit. Perhaps this is because they consider it easier from a propaganda viewpoint to attack our throw-weight position in the hope that, if we fall off throw-weight, the 5000 number will automatically creep upward without the Soviets' having to bear public blame for demanding a higher warhead number. In any case, if the above assessment is approximately correct, the prospects for substantial reductions in ballistic missile forces are bleak.

(S) The Soviets continued to insist on aggregate limits for both delivery vehicles and weapons. For the Soviets, aggregation with complete freedom to mix among weapon categories serves two critical functions. First, it allows them to retain their present mix of missile and bomber capabilities. Second, it allows them to offset what they characterize as U.S. advantages in heavy bomber systems with Soviet advantages in ballistic missile systems.

(S) The United States continued to insist on separate limits for ballistic systems and slow-flying systems. For us, aggregation with freedom to mix among weapon categories raises two basic objections. First, it would virtually assure de facto inequality between the United States and the Soviet Union in ballistic missiles and warheads, thus violating a fundamental U.S. principle in these negotiations. Second, it would hamper our ability to maintain the effectiveness of our heavy bomber deterrent, because we could augment our heavy bomber weapons only at the expense of ballistic missile weapons. Separate limits on ballistic and heavy bomber systems as we have proposed would avoid this problem. To the Soviets, however, separate limits could mean de facto inferiority in bomber capabilities, with no offsetting advantage in ballistic missile capabilities. Thus these conflicting conceptual frameworks have become a fundamental sticking point in the negotiations.

(S) During this round the Soviets emphasized so-called "U.S. forward-based systems" to an unusual degree. Their formal and informal statements contained noticeably more references to "FBS" and the necessity of taking them into account in the strategic relationship. The Soviets seemed to stress more pointedly than before that their proposed reduction to 1800 delivery vehicles is contingent upon no increase in U.S. "FBS."

(S) If the Soviets mean what they are telling us, then their present START proposal is quite tentative and is liable to major revisions when INF deployments begin. Such revisions could include raising the 1800 number, more severe constraints on U.S. strategic forces to offset INF deployments, compensation in START for British and French nuclear systems, or similar demands. So long as the Soviets link START and INF in this manner, I do not expect them to bargain seriously in START until INF is resolved.

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-5-

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~~Unannounced disclosure subject to~~  
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~~Handle as normal data on foreign~~  
~~classification, in Section 1.14, Atomic~~  
~~Energy Act, 1954.~~

### Conclusions

(S) The flexibility which the United States introduced during round four may be playing well domestically, but so far we have little to show for it in Geneva. Perhaps the Soviet delegation had no latitude to respond with other than denigration and will return in round five with some leeway to explore the openings we have given them. Perhaps the Soviets will maintain a rigid stand in the hope of extracting significant concessions from our "flexibility."

(S) In either case, I believe we have a sound position which should serve us well for some time to come. In the absence of reciprocal Soviet flexibility, any but the most marginal modifications to our current position would be unwise. Otherwise, the risk is high that the Soviets will assume a lack of U.S. resolve to take a position and hold it, and we will inevitably slip into the practice of self-negotiation which too often has characterized previous U.S. negotiations with the Soviet Union.

(S) On the other hand, should the Soviets be willing to meet us half way, we will have to be prepared to modify our current proposal in significant ways if we wish an agreement. Unless the negotiating frameworks of the two parties become more compatible, we cannot realistically expect significant movement in START. How the frameworks could be reconciled will remain a large question until the Soviets indicate that they are ready to explore possibilities. I believe it is premature for the United States to initiate such an exploration, but we should be ready for it in the event that Soviet moves or other circumstances so justify.

(S) If that time comes, however, we must not delude ourselves: The Soviets are -- and probably will remain -- less interested in militarily significant reductions than in protecting their own strengths. Therefore, any framework they are likely to accept will probably fall far short of our original goal to reduce substantially the Soviet strategic threat to the United States. In that event, we will again face the question of whether an agreement low in strategic benefit nonetheless can be justified as in the best interests of the United States.

(S) Apart from the question of framework, there remain certain issues on which the United States has yet to stake out a position. One such issue is how or whether to constrain sea-launched cruise missiles. Ambassador Rowny recently sent you a recommendation on SLCMs which deserves serious consideration. I have already given you my comments separately on his proposal.

Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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Declassify in Part: X

Reason: 1.3(b)(2)(4)(6) + (e.7)(2)

MDR: 18 -M- 0689

*Michael H. Mobbs*  
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Representative of the  
Secretary of Defense to the  
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