



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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April 9, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESEARCH & ENGINEERING
SUBJECT: Summary of Congressional Support for Dense Pack

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

There is support for Dense Pack, however, to date it is limited to a few Members and staff. Both Tony Battista (Staff, HASC) and Bill Dickinson appear to be comfortable with the concept, however, their support is based on the following.

First, it appears considerably more survivable than putting MX into MINUTEMAN silos. Second, the schedule of availability is about the same as interim basing. Third, it can be advertised as permanent. It was indicated, however, that if we selected that basing mode, there would be no objection to further study of deep underground basing as an adjunct and BMD as a defensive addition. Battista indicated that it would be helpful to have a SecDef letter, anticipating floor action, indicating that we would have a permanent basing selection by 1 December, that we were seriously considering a more survivable basing mode (such as Dense Pack), but that we would like to keep our options open and to continue examining BMD and deep underground basing. Battista appeared confident that with such a letter a floor fight could be won.

There is one pitfall, as expressed by Tom Cooper (Staff, HASC). If the Administration suddenly springs forth with a basing mode as a result of pressure put forth by the Senate action we are in danger of being "laughed off the floor". His point, although we can rely on support from Bill Dickinson and possibly Chairman Price and Sam Stratton, they do not make up the full Committee. There has been no mention of Dense Pack in formal hearings.

We will not be able to gather more information relative to wide spread support for Dense Pack or a similar mode until the Members come back from recess. However, the Air Force is confident that support can be gathered with a well orchestrated Congressional campaign demonstrating that OSD and the Air Force are both supporting the concept.

As of this date, the bottom lines are:

- (1) There appears to be more support for Dense Pack than interim basing. That support is based on increased survivability, ability to achieve in a similar timeframe and that it can be called permanent. However, very few Members to date know anything about Dense Pack per se. This must be corrected through selected

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briefings.

(2) The alternative to not giving an indication of meeting the December deadline and carefully crafting a consensus for a permanent basing mode such as Dense Pack is to risk the entire MX program on the House floor.

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE/SENATE


First and foremost, there needs to be a full appreciation of the need to not appear as flip-flopping on the strategic decision. Such action would easily be interpreted as vacillation, uncertainty and incompetence. While there is a desire to act quickly on presenting Dense Pack to the Congress we must ensure that sufficient time is taken to comprehensively address this matter by the Department as well as the Congress. If Dense Pack is as good as some say, it should stand the test of the most careful scrutiny between now and December.

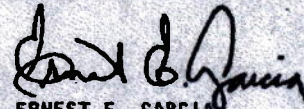
Relatively speaking, few people on the Hill know anything about Dense Pack. Those who do know about Dense Pack have not necessarily embraced the concept with much enthusiasm. One week ago, for example, at a press conference, Senator Tower suggested it was an "interesting" alternative.

At this point in time for anyone to suggest that Dense Pack would meet with Hill approval would be imprudent and misleading. Also, at this point, we do not believe there is a way to evaluate the practical impact of Dense Pack.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on limited and quick analyses of the House and Senate, our recommendation to the Secretary is to promote that the best course of action is to cooperate with Congress, i.e. accept Congressional action to fore-going interim basing and work closely with key Members of Congress to formulate a permanent basing mode by December. This would include giving the MASC and SASC whatever they consider necessary to successfully defeat floor assaults on the missile and basing funds. This would afford us time to reasonably adopt Dense Pack or any other mode that offers survivability and public acceptance.


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Attachment

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