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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

27 April 1972

5 U.S.C. 552 + (b)(1) (b)(3)

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: SALT

I talked with Paul Nitze on 4/27/72. The following observations are the result.

1. The U.S. delegation has the feeling that Kissinger did discuss SALT with the Soviet leaders in Moscow and that the Soviet delegation knows more than the U.S. delegation about what was said. This feeling leaves the U.S. delegation reluctant to negotiate very vigorously.

2. Last week's new intelligence on Soviet ICBM development must be interpreted with caution. If the new development does turn out to be a new missile with a throw weight 1 1/2 to 2 times that of the SS-9, that is what we should have expected, although it appears to surprise CIA and ACDA. Paul's rationale as to why the Soviets want greater throw weight: To preempt Minuteman with confidence requires about 2 RVs per Minuteman silo; with only about 300 launchers, this requires 6 MIRVs per missile; if the Soviets can only be sure of about 1/4 nmi CEP, they need about 5 megatons yield; six 5MT RVs require about 1-1/2 to 2 times the SS-9 throw weight. Thus, if the SS-9 were replaced by this new missile, the Soviets could have a first strike capability against Minuteman. Nothing in our presently formulated interim offensive limitation proposals would preclude this replacement. The closest we have come is the limitations we have proposed on depth and diameter, but these have so far been used to prevent upgrade of "light" ICBMs (e.g. SS-11s) to MLBMs, rather than to prevent upgrading MLBMs themselves.

NSDM-158, para. 17 authorizes Smith to state: If the USSR were to undertake a concerted program which substantially increased the threat to survivability of our strategic retaliatory forces, the U.S. would consider this to jeopardize our supreme interests. Consequently this could be a basis for withdrawal from the ABM treaty. (Smith has not yet made this statement and seems very reluctant to do so.)

The recent intelligence is subject to more than one interpretation. If the large object seen is in fact a large booster so that the throw weight is greater than that of the SS-9, then we may be in the position of entering into an agreement when the development which would lead us to withdraw is already observably underway and not limited. We would be agreeing to forego site defense of Minuteman when an allowable program to preempt Minuteman was already underway.

Sec Def has seen
28 Apr 1972

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If subsequent intelligence confirms the large booster interpretation, it might be hard for us to defend ratification of the agreement. We would have to justify confidence that in the follow-on negotiations we can either stop the deployment of this new missile or modify the ABM agreement to allow site defense.

If subsequent intelligence does not confirm the large booster interpretation, our case would be somewhat easier, because the counterforce development would not be manifest although still possible.

To me all of this reinforces the importance of exercising the instruction in paragraph 17 of the NSDM in some forceful way, distasteful though that may be to Gerry Smith. It also means we should strongly prefer not to impose the MARC concept on ICBM defense, because that defense may have to be expanded in the next few years to an effective site defense.

I plan to come to you shortly with a discussion of alternative ways to exercise the essence of paragraph 17.

Gardiner L. Tucker
Assistant Secretary of Defense