MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Walter B. Slocombe

SUBJECT: A Safeguard Site at Washington for FY 71?

The President indicated at the NSC meeting, in response to your suggestion and the comments of others, that he wanted to consider the possibility of substituting a Safeguard site at Washington for the one DOD proposed for the Pacific Northwest.

This memorandum sets forth some of the factors which might be considered in deciding on the wisdom of that substitution.

What is a Washington site?

I have assumed, on the basis of DOD listings of alternatives in earlier documents in the course of the review, that the Washington site would have a Missile Site Radar (MSR), but no Perimeter Acquisition Radar (PAR), and that it would have both Spartans for long range interception and Sprints for terminal defense of the capital itself. DOD illustrative systems assign about 100 missiles, divided between Spartan and Sprint to the Washington site. The Sprint sites would have to be within 15-20 miles of the city; the MSR and the Spartans could be farther away.

Advantages

There is a strong theoretical political and strategic argument that NCA defense may be the most important element of an ABM system:

-- A third country -- or a crazed unit commander -- who wanted to provoke a nuclear exchange between the U.S. and the USSR might believe Washington an ideal target, hoping that, with the head destroyed, the limbs would lash out spasmodically at the other superpower. A defense of the capital would lessen the temptation to make such attacks and reduce the danger, however small, of a "mistaken" retaliation. The kind of system which would be built for Washington could probably effectively deny damage to command facilities against a small attack. The degree of protection afforded, however, is highly dependent on the assumptions about the character of the attack.
Although the NCA defense objective was not given high prominence, the NCA defense objective was not given high prominence -

Reinforcing capability.

It would carry forward the General objective of using active defense of our

More broadly, by protecting the 'province' of the retaliatory force,

...command and control authorities.

We will provide for an area defense designed to protect

what we achieve one of the stated specific objectives.

Third, such a deployment would be fully consistent with the rationale of the

this is not a pre-planned trade-off, it is a matter of judgment.

deterrent effect, our objective is now protected; in previous years, it is a charge which might be leveled at

we cannot afford to trade off a handful of concrete, reinforcing a point.

Neither the Soviets nor the congressional opposition could realistically give

Second, from the SALT point of view, protection of Washington could be

defended as a simple equivalent of the system the Soviets have deployed

be given to the President and other senior officials to move to alternative

and penetration were destroyed, allowing more time for the attack orders to

However, we could deny the time when the White House could not do damage. For the Soviets could exhaust the available supply

would be less well coordinated than one launched by an authority of immense

An attack on a mass center of attack on a capital, we

would be less well coordinated than one launched by an authority of immense

in an actual attack, a retaliation launches under nuclear attack procedures.

If possible, that those of Washington would not prevent strategic retaliation.

the command and control structures are so controllable and controllable structures are so controllable that the defense

'Complete with' 'On the contrary, the Soviets might believe that our

to negotiate with' 'On the contrary, the Soviets might believe that we

the meaning's capital in the hope of initiating retaliation and leaving someone

On the other hand, we cannot safely assume that the Soviets share

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Authority O\L\C\Q
he populates Northeastern Corridor provides valuable redundant coverage and radar support for protecting the New England and Michigan/Oho sites are in place, the Washington site once be protected if the Washington site did not exist. On the other hand, once the site is complete, the databases show what would not.

The National Security System is complete. The databases show the area protected.

Components' contributing to coverage even after the full seven site test.

As shown in the map at Tab D, the Washington site makes a

southeast.

Washington site can track missiles which pass over Washington toward targets in the

Grand Forks site allows coverage only toward Lake Erie, while the MNS site.

east approach of the coverage of the Washington site. Thus, a

bristled with radar sites, but not interconnected. (The map at Tab A

covered over the Northeastern Corridor toward New York will be very

covered with the other PAMs at Michigan/Oho and New England, are available. The area

will have no part of its own. This means that

Second, a Washington site, though nominally a part of the DOD

system for limited area defense, gives very little area coverage.

The shortcomings of the system are evident, but likely, may be essentially
decisive. On the other hand, it will likely have to be politically

decisive. The argument is essentially internal, but may be politically

The president and Congress, but delaying an area defense for the population

First, they may be political problems with appearing to protect the

Disadvantages:

building more sites beyond those on which work can actually begin, the

that is to make sure they receive the administration's commit to

determine system is intended to build. "Place" area sites have the disadvantage

the administration has started to take a definite stand on what kind of area

The importance of this in the interest of the site. Therefore, work can begin on it without

a. e. Northeast, the Washington site, when complete will serve an

Poutry, unlike a site whose only function is to a part of an area defense,

The Chinese

in public and then start on an ADR system designed to protect against

adds the apparent contradiction of taking a great deal about the SS-9
defense is directed jointly at Soviet and Chinese attack, building it

survey was said which is consistent with it. Moreover, since NCA
Third, insofar as one is concerned about protecting the NCA against a massive Soviet attack, Washington is a "hard point" just as much as a Minuteman field, and the technical argument against the usefulness of Safeguard components applies. However, the criticism is not so serious as against Minuteman defense:

-- One is also concerned about defending Washington, but not MM against Chinese, Nth country, and accidental attacks.

-- Taking out the MSR before striking the main target would presumably take some time, as well as absorbing attacking RVs. Unless you are willing to fire Minutemen (through pindown, EMP and debris) on warning, that is no help with Minuteman defense. When defending the President, on the contrary, it is time you are most concerned to win by your defense.

Fourth, the Washington site provides practically no defense of bombers. Neither, for that matter, does the Northwest site acting alone, though the New England one does. From the point of bomber protection, the lack of a PAR at Washington is a disadvantage, just as with area defense, for it delays the time before the system has seaward coverage for more distant ABM sites.

Fifth, the argument that a Washington site is good from the point of view of SALT is not unanswerable:

-- The comparability of a Washington site to the Galosh system at Moscow may be more convincing to U.S. lawyers than to Soviet marshals. We say they are the same because they both protect national capitals. They may argue they are totally different because theirs is finished while ours is just beginning.

-- It could be argued that if we are going to try to persuade the Soviets to accept a dichotomy between ABM aimed at them (destabilizing and negotiable) and ABMs aimed at third countries and accidental attacks (no threat to them and not negotiable), we would do better to concentrate our early deployments on a site without dual purpose, but build instead an area site which can be defended publicly as aimed solely at China.

Finally, if the President is committed to have an area defense permitted the U.S. as part of a SALT agreement, at least unless the Soviets come up with a tremendously attractive counter offer, it may be that we should get started on the area system before an agreement is signed:
Actually starting construction might be the most effective way of demonstrating commitment to the system.

However, irrational such a reaction might be strategically, Congress might balk at starting a large area system immediately after an agreement was signed, even if the agreement allowed the system to be built. An initial deployment on a site for area protection only might tend to involve the Congress in the President's commitment to finish the system.
- By large, blunt RVs for basic Spartan.

Coverage provided by twelve site defense for CPR attacks by large blunt RVs for improved Spartan.

Coverage added to 7-site system by Washington site.