

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

TALKING POINTS

NSC MEETING

Monday, October 7, 1974 -- 2:00 p.m.

-- Mr. President, as you directed at the last NSC meeting, the Verification Panel has been analyzing specific proposals for a SALT agreement.

-- Alex Johnson is discussing some broad principles in Geneva, but the Soviets are obviously waiting for a proposal from you before negotiating seriously.

-- Today, we can review the major issues, and you will want to have one more NSC meeting before my trip to Moscow.

In considering the major issues, we have to keep in mind three aspects:

- (1) the projected programs of each side, as far as we can foresee them now,
- (2) the internal design of the forces on each side,
- (3) the negotiating history in SALT thus far.

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I. Present US/USSR Strategic Force Programs

-- At present, we have 1,054 ICBMs, 656 SLBMs, and almost 500 B-52's. We are holding 200 older B-52 bombers and some 50 older ICBMs in the force structure until we have a SALT agreement, even though we would prefer to phase out these older systems even now for budgetary reasons.

-- Once we have deployed our new Trident -- about 240 missiles -- and B-1 systems -- about 240 -- we could envisage a force structure containing about 2000 missiles and bombers in the 1980's -- 1000 Minuteman ICBMs, 740 SLBMs (including 240 Trident), and 240 B-1 bombers.

Thus, for SALT purposes, we could accept levels around 2000.

-- In contrast, the Soviets probably plan to keep a force of about 2500 missiles and bombers -- 1400 ICBMs, 950 SLBMs, and 150 bombers which is their projected level under the current agreement.

-- It seems reasonably clear that none of these forces are being retained strictly for negotiating leverage -- they have firm plans to continue operating all of them. The result is a potential numerical difference of 300-500.

II. Force Design

differences in
-- In addition to numbers, the two sides have taken quite different approaches to the structure of their forces.

-- The US has utilized its technology advantage, especially its capability for miniaturization, for extensive MIRVs on ICBMs and SLBMs. The Soviets have built much larger missiles, of lesser quality than the US missiles, but they have the potential for a larger number of MIRVs and the throw weight of their forces is much greater in ICBMs, while we have much greater bomber pay loads.

-- We can, of course, double the yield of the Minuteman warhead without any other changes to the system.

-- In the category of heavy bombers, the Soviets have not built a new one since the late 1950s. We have not only a technological lead over the Soviets, which will grow as the B-1 enters the inventory, but also a significant numerical advantage.

-- Our Trident submarine is a third generation missile submarine, which will carry a fifth generation missile (the generations being Polaris A-1, A-2, A-3, Poseidon, Trident I). The Soviets have not tested a MIRV for their SLBM, and Brezhnev has admitted in private they are significantly behind us in SLBM technology.

-- The Soviets have emphasized ICBMs. They make up in size and brute force what they lack in technology and sophistication.

III. Negotiating History

These problems in numerical differences and differing force design, have been reflected in the negotiating history. There are two key aspects

in the SALT negotiating history that we have to keep in mind:

-- Whenever we have sought equal aggregates we have encountered the problem of Soviet rejection because of our advantage in forward based systems.

-- Whenever we have attempted to devise limitations of throwweight, we have encountered the fact that the heavier Soviet throwweight per missile produces large disparities in total launcher numbers for them which they find unacceptable.

-- In addition, in dealing with MIRV limits in a series of meetings with Brezhnev this year, we have found the Soviets adamantly opposed to anything smacking of a sublimit on their ICBM MIRV forces: they reject our dictating to them how they configure their forces. (This point does not apply quite so strongly to limits on heavy ICBMs -- which they already accepted in principle in the Interim Agreement -- and we therefore probably have negotiating room on that issue.)

-- Further, we have to recognize that proposals that essentially leave our own programs unaffected while requiring major curtailments in Soviet programs will prove unacceptable to them, just as proposals that freeze us roughly at existing force levels while permitting dynamic Soviet buildups are unacceptable to us.

-- This I think is a fair summary of the main issues in negotiating history since SALT I, especially of this past year in which we have highlighted the need for MIRV limitations.

THE MAJOR ISSUES

I. Equal Aggregates -- a Purely Numerical Limit

-- A proposal that concentrates on limiting gross numbers has the virtue of simplicity and is easily verifiable; it gives each side maximum freedom in their force structures. The Option we have examined sets a common level of 2,000, with no other constraints.

-- If we set the ceiling at this level of 2000, we would reduce mainly older systems, B-52s and Polaris that we may retire in any case.

-- The Soviets would have to reduce by 500, thus cutting into their current force projections, as allowed under the Interim Agreement. This approach will encounter the following Soviet objections:

- . that the US advantage in forward based systems is not reflected in equal aggregates of ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers,
- . that this approach ignores the threat posed by the nuclear forces of our allies,
- . and that the USSR has a strategic requirement for more weapons than we do, because of third countries (i. e. China).

-- the simple equal aggregates approach also suffers from the absence of MIRV limits, leading to a possible Soviet advantage. The absence of any MIRV limit would also be a break from all our previous proposals.

Finally, this approach also would leave the throwweight differences unconstrained, perhaps forcing a major US buildup.

II. Missile Throw Weight Limits

In this light some prefer to combine equal aggregates at 2,000, with an equal missile throw weight limit for the two sides.

The option considered sets the missile throw weight limit at 6 million pounds, compared to the Soviet level of 14.

The implications are:

-- The Soviets would dismantle essentially their entire heavy ICBM force of SS-9s.

-- They could deploy only about 400 of their new medium SS-17 and SS-19 ICBMs out of a potential of 1030.

--The Soviet SLBM force would be reduced by over 170.

-- Indeed, it may be impossible for the Soviets to achieve equal numbers and throw weight without a drastic overhaul of their force structure.

-- The Soviets will argue that our bomber payload more than offsets their missile throw weight.

On the other hand, this Option strikes at a major Soviet advantage.

-- If it could be negotiated, it would set a cap on the potential for a further build up in the size of their missiles.

III. MIRV Limitations

Under the two preceding Options of equal numbers and equal missile throw weight, MIRVs could be left unchecked.

There is the alternative of adding to the second Option a limit based on the throw weight of MIRVed missiles.

-- Thus, this variant of the second Option would be to limit the total throw weight of missiles that had MIRVs to 4. million pounds for each side.

The implications of this limit would be:

-- for the US there would be no change in existing programs: our total throw weight of the MM force at planned levels of 550, plus the Poseidon and Trident force would still leave us under the proposed 4 million pounds and give us 1286 MIRV missiles.

-- For the Soviets, they could not have MIRVs on more than about 40 of the heavy SS-18 missiles, or more than 380 of their new SS-19s, plus no more than 240 SLBM MIRVs, for a total of about 700.

Alternatively the Soviets could concentrate all of their MIRV throw weight in land based ICBMs for about 600 new medium sized SS-19s, and give up SLBM MIRVs entirely.

In this connection, Brezhnev strongly rejected a MIRV limit of 750 last summer for the next 3 years, which is even more favorable than the one suggested under the equal MIRV throw weight option for 10 years.

In sum, this approach leads to a very precise equality based on one important measure of strategic capability -- but, inevitably, it leads to substantially different numbers of MIRV launchers, or to a radical redesign of Soviet force structures to reach equal MIRV numbers.

IV. Balanced Advantages

The third Option we have considered takes into account the difficulties raised by the preceding Options and seeks to strike a balance between various aspects of the two forces in which the advantage of one side would be offset by the advantage of the other side in a different category.

-- First, under this approach there could be a numerical difference in the forces, with the US at its reduced level of 2000 and the Soviets somewhat higher at 2200 -- in effect about a ten percent reduction for each side.

-- Second, this approach would incorporate different numerical MIRV limits: 1350 for the US, and 1050 for the USSR.

-- Third, this approach would set an equal limit on the number of heavy bombers and heavy ICBMs at 250.

The implications of this Option would be:

-- The US could continue with its plan to retire its B-52 forces -- about 500 -- and the Polaris force of 160 SLBMs, replacing them with B-1 and Trident to reach the 2000 limit.

-- The Soviets would retire about 250 -- but to meet the sublimit on heavy delivery systems, they would have to choose between reducing bombers and heavy SS-18 types to reach the sublimit of 250.

-- That sublimit would mean no more than 250 B-1s for the US, which is about our target.

Our MIRV program would not be affected, we could add the Trident MIRV force to the Poseidon force and remain at the MM MIRV level of 550, or slightly higher, which is about our plan.

-- The Soviets could allocate their 1050 MIRVs as they chose, probably going for a balanced program of 600-700 land based MIRV and 300-400 sea based systems.

Under this approach the 200 difference in overall numbers could be regarded as offsetting Soviet insistence on including our forward based systems.

-- The difference in our favor in total warheads would offset their throw weight advantage.

The arguments against this are:

-- Unequal numbers would favor the Soviets should the agreement lapse or break down;

-- throw weight is not specifically limited;

-- our force planning would be constrained by MIRV limits and by sublimits on heavy systems;

-- the Soviets could concentrate their MIRVs in heavy missiles and a few light ones, giving them a break-out potential later in the 1980s.

V. Reductions

The final issue is whether we can expect to achieve reductions in strategic forces.

-- All of the preceding Options are based on moving toward a reduction of from 300 to 500 from present Soviet level.

-- All would require the US to dismantle some or all of our older systems, mainly the B-52s and Polaris.

The basic problems therefore are:

-- First, that our reductions probably seem less important to the Soviets than what they would have to cut from current forces.

-- Second, that reductions leave the Soviet argument over forward basing out of the calculations;

-- Third, that the Soviets may not be in a position to make reductions because of third country problems, primarily China.

Thus, if reductions are to be negotiated, we will probably face the question of how to deal with proposals to withdraw from our submarine bases in Holy Loch and Rota, limit our forward based aircraft in Central Europe and Asia, and limit our carrier aircraft.

-- The Soviets in Geneva are now arguing that these forward based systems must be "taken into account", a possible softening of their previous absurd position that they be entirely withdrawn;

-- This may foreshadow a proposal to count them in any aggregate;

-- This could mean adding 300-400 on our side, in which case the Soviets might then propose equal reductions.

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In sum, we have two very basic approaches to SALT.

1. The first emphasizes equal numbers and equal missile throw weight, and equal throw weight of MIRVed missiles;

-- the objective would be to precipitate a restructuring of the Soviet forces so that their overall force would become quite similar to ours.

-- It would encounter stiff Soviet negotiating resistance and involve a high price if negotiable.

2. The second approach would accept some disparity in numbers and throw weight, in return for an advantage in MIRV missiles and forward based systems.

-- It would risk criticism of being unequal in appearance and leaving Soviet throw weight potential unconstrained in the future.

-- It would be an evolution of past positions and could lead to an earlier agreement.