

Record of Conversations between Sergey Fyodorovich Akhromeev and Paul Nitze at the U.S. State Department, December 9, 1987 (the conversations starts at 8.00). Excerpt.

Akhromeev. We examined your version of the Document and agree to conduct further discussions based on this version. We prepared eight copies of your text with our corrections. Allow me to hand them to you (passes the document). I propose to assign a group for final editing. From our side this work could be done by Cdes A.A. Obukhov and V.I. Medvedev, with the goal of being ready to present the edited text to the leadership tomorrow morning. I propose to work page by page.

Nitze. On the second page of the Russian text in the first line it says “about 50 percent.” Is this correct?

Akhromeev. Precisely so.

Nitze. The content of this paragraph should be recorded in the text of the Agreement as a unilateral statement.

Akhromeev. As we understand, this will be formulated as follows: the total throwweight of ICBM and SLBM of the USSR will be reduced by about 50 percent and will not be increased by the sides for the duration of the Treaty.

Nitze. Will not be exceeded by the sides.

Akhromeev. Then, as I understand, this proposal should be incorporated in the text of the Treaty, but it should pertain to both sides.

Nitze. Further, under point “a” the problem is with the number “5100,” we would prefer “4800.” Further, we propose to remove the phrase “...SLBM warheads,” thereby leaving the sides with the right of substitution within the agreed total limitations.

Akhromeev. I propose to remove these one and a half lines altogether, finishing the sentence after the words “... within the framework of the total level of 6000 units of weapons.” I am proceeding from the principle of the sides’ equality: if you do not want to establish a sublevel on SLBM warheads, then why should the Soviet side be responsible for sublevels of ICBM warheads? We are establishing a sublevel for heavy missiles at 154 units, 1540 warheads, thereby cooperating with you on the issue that worried you. In fact we would not exceed the ICBM sublevel of more than 3300 warheads, but we should respect the principle of the sides’ equality.

P. How. On point “b” we see a problem in the 600 km range of cruise missiles. We do not understand why you insist on this range.

Akhromeev. Cruise missiles with the range of 1500 km also fall under the category of long-range means prohibited by the Treaty signed yesterday. Air-launched

cruise missiles are in the category of strategic weapons only because they are considered as one unit with the carrier—a strategic bomber; the combat range of bombers in the USSR and the U.S. is well known to you—it is 5-7 and more thousand kilometers, i.e. the range of strategic means. Today we do not see a reason to move away from this position.

W. Leman. Geographical factors have a different effect on each side. Moreover, as a result of the improvement of your anti-aircraft defense system many types of bombers have become obsolete, and for others the launching line has changed significantly. In our assessment, your anti-aircraft defense system considerably exceeds 600 km. In addition, we should think about the future. On this basis we consider the number 1500 more appropriate.

Akhromeev. I propose to bracket the cruise missile ranges and return to this question later.

Nitze. In the next paragraph there is a proposition to decide on the number of long-range air-launched cruise missiles based on the results of observation of aircraft testing. In our opinion, we should agree on the quantitative characteristics by the types of bombers, proceeding from the fact that modern aircraft has different types of combat capabilities, also considering anti-aircraft defense. Moreover, the method we propose would simplify verification of compliance with the limitations.

Akhromeev. Different physical-geographic conditions in the USSR and the U.S. mean that our heavy bomber aviation can be based only on our territory, in relation to which the number of missiles with the consideration of fuel consumption will be limited to 6 on old bombers and a few more on the new ones. American bombers are based close to our borders and can carry more missiles due to the smaller amount of necessary fuel. This inequality in our situations causes our concern. I am also worried about the fact that we are cooperating with you on a number of positions, but I do not see a similar action on your side. We reduced heavy missiles by 50 percent. We agreed to your rules of counting heavy bombers with bombs and missiles AM. I will not continue down the list. We do not see such a movement to meet us halfway from you. There will be no unilateral movement. Right now I propose to return the second page for editing, because the positions on points “a” and “b” have been defined.

M. Linhart. We differ on the question of air-launched cruise missiles range. But we agree that a restriction on this parameter should be recorded.

[Source: Obtained from a participant by the author in 1996
Translated by Anna Melyakova]