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Authority **EO 12958**  
By **EK** NARA Date **07/16**

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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SECRET/SENSITIVE

April 15, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Contractor Doubts about Safeguard

It has been known for some time that Bell Telephone Labs, the principal contractor for the Safeguard system, wanted to get out of the ABM business once Safeguard Phase 2 was finished. Up to now, we have believed that the reason was a feeling that the problems of Safeguard had become ones more of management than of engineering and that they disliked having to pay the public relations price of continued association with so controversial a program.

However, recently there have been indications that Bell Labs' dissatisfaction with the program purports to be based on a belief that the system, as it is being built, cannot adequately perform the missions assigned to it.

Members of my staff met recently with two senior officials of Bell at the invitation of Lee DuBridge and his staff. The Bell people maintained that while the system will meet the technical specifications set for it, it is their belief that its contribution to military missions will be very slight:

-- The Minuteman defense could be defeated by attacking the radars with only a few missiles.

-- Simple Chinese penetration aids could shrink the area defense coverage to insignificance.

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-- The defense of bombers against submarine missiles would be ineffective.

They argued that the technological advances needed to defeat Safeguard are likely to be made by our adversaries before the Safeguard system is ready or soon afterward.

They blamed these shortcomings on changes in the system and its missions in the switch from Sentinel to Safeguard, on the delays in scheduled completion, and on what they describe as governmental exaggeration of the ability of the system to perform its missions against advanced threats. They also argued that although some (very expensive) changes would deal with some of these problems, the Safeguard system would not provide a good base from which to build to a more sophisticated, more capable system.

As technical arguments, these criticisms are neither novel nor particularly impressive. For example, the attack on the radars would require very exact coordination of the timing of missile launches, as well as new warheads for Soviet missiles.

I find it hard to believe that these arguments can be the real basis for the Bell officials feeling that the system is not a sound one.

However, whatever their validity or sincerity, these arguments, coming from the mouths of the senior officials of the company in charge of building the system, are potentially devastating.

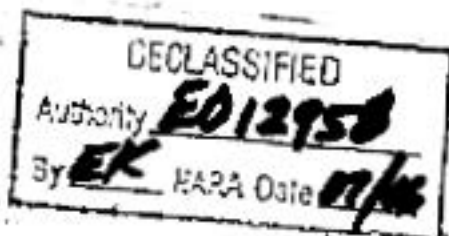
I am trying to find out, both from the Defense Department and from other sources, what is going on with Bell and Safeguard, in order that we can deal with the problems this situation may create.

*My guess is that the real names are their scientists - + P. R. Jones -*

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APR 16 1970

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

ACTION

April 14, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. *el*

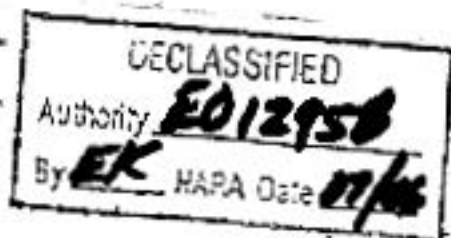
SUBJECT: Bell Labs on Safeguard

Bell Labs, the principal contractor for the Safeguard system, has apparently decided that Safeguard is not worth building. The President may be facing a major embarrassment in connection with this disaffection.

Originally, Bell Labs' desire to end its association with the program was explained as resulting from a desire to get out of a problem which had absorbed much of Bell Labs' energies for many years and was beginning to turn into a management and engineering instead of an advanced technology problem, and from a sensitivity to public criticism of Bell Labs' major defense role. An exchange of letters between Bell and the Army early this year embodied this view, looking toward an arrangement in which Bell Labs would finish out the work on Safeguard Phase 2 and gradually get out of the ABM business in an orderly way.

It now appears that the nature of the problem goes deeper. I met April 9 in Lee DuBridge's office with Julius Molnar, the Executive Vice President of Bell Telephone, and Brockway McMillan, Vice President, Bell Military Development. I gather from their statements that Bell is now presenting its desire to get out in terms of an unwillingness to continue to be associated with a program which cannot technically perform the missions the Government claims it will accomplish.

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They said:

-- The Minuteman defense could be overwhelmed or defeated by blacking out the radars.

-- The area defense could be shrunk to coverages which would deny its usefulness against Chinese threats by development of simple Chinese penetration aids.

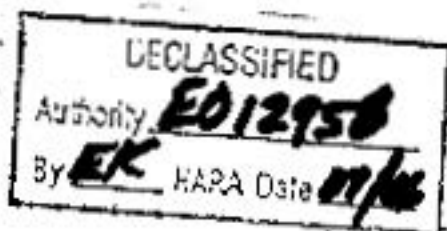
-- The defense of bombers would be ineffective against low trajectory attacks, assuming the Soviets made a major effort to gear their SLBM force for a surprise attack on SAC bases defended by Safeguard.

What they said in specific terms was a not very exciting recital of familiar anti-Safeguard technical arguments:

-- The MSR radars could be destroyed by 6-10 SS-11s, negating the Minuteman defense. (They conceded that this would require a 1000 Beta SS-11 [it is now 300, and they are developing a 600 Beta RV for the SS-11] and an SS-11 MIRV to get the necessary very close spacing, but they argued that these will be well within Soviet capability before Safeguard is ready.)

-- The area defense against China would be negated by development of simple penetration aids, e. g., balloons, because, since the PAR can't discriminate RVs from pen aids, intercepts would have to be made after the RVs had been exposed by entry into the atmosphere. Because of limits on radar and missile performance under these conditions, this would reduce the defense to an area of some 200 miles around the sites. (They maintained that, in their view, while there was room for debate, the Chinese would probably face no serious difficulties in building such penetration aids, assuming they had the technological capability to build an ICBM force at all.)

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There is nothing about these arguments which hasn't been in the public domain for at least a year and known to technical people for far longer. I simply cannot believe that these arguments have suddenly become so convincing that Bell wants to get out on grounds of "conscience."

The whole pattern of the argument made yesterday was highly self-serving. They claimed:

-- The system's individual components are coming along fine and the system as a whole can be made to work as designed. (That is, Bell has done its job.)

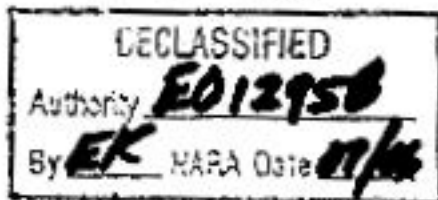
-- The components were designed for Sentinel, not Safeguard, and they are not optimal for the Safeguard missions of Minuteman defense, bomber defense and defense of cities without terminal sites. (That is, the components were designed for one mission and then the politicians changed the mission and what can you expect. There are real troubles with that argument: Minuteman defense was a feature of Sentinel and the city Sprint coverage of Sentinel would not have made it effective if subject to the requirements they believe Chinese penetration aids will impose.)

-- The delays caused by the changes in missions, budgetary stretch-outs, and problems in getting the system approved have meant that when complete it will have to face a later, more sophisticated threat.

-- The fixes they suggest, e.g., three MSR's at each site to avoid blackout, "loiter" mode improved Spartan (which they say isn't a very plausible concept) all cost lots of money and/or take lots of time.

-- The system is being advertised as capable of doing things it was never designed to do, in any version. (That is, "virtual infallibility.")

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In other words, everyone is at fault except Ma Bell and she, conscience-stricken, won't have any more of it.

There must be a great deal more to this than appears on the surface. Possibly there have been internal shifts in Bell Labs; or costs are rising, making the project unattractive financially; or, most serious of all, despite their expressed confidence on the purely technical side, they may see a major snag in the development coming and want to get out while the getting is good.

The potential for disaster for the program is obvious. Apart from the difficulties of switching from Bell management to some in-government organization (which is what I gather they may have in mind), for it to become known that the senior technical officials of the company building the system have no confidence in its usefulness for the missions assigned it would seal the fate of the program.

The attached memorandum for the President draws his attention to the problem and says that you are looking into it further.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memo at Tab A for the President.

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