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By [Signature] NARA Date 1/6/99



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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August 5, 1971

TO : The Under Secretary

FROM: PM [Signature] Ronald I. Spiers

8/5/71

SALT: Future ABM Systems - Verification  
Panel Meeting August 9 at 3:00 p.m.

The Verification Panel Working Group is preparing a study examining "Future ABM Systems" (Tab A), which assesses how the US national interest would be affected by the scope of limitations on ABM systems in a SALT agreement. The Panel is scheduled to discuss the issue August 9 at 3:00 p.m.

The text tabled by the US on July 27, 1971, of an Agreement on Strategic Defensive Arms includes limits on ABM radars, launchers, and interceptor missiles. The draft agreement was tabled with bracketed "holding" language in place of paragraph one in Article 6 which will address future ABM systems.

The paper on "Future ABM Systems" contains suggested language for paragraph one of Article 6, which would place fixed land-based future ABM systems using devices other than ABM interceptor missiles or ABM radars in one category, and any other type of ABM system or components (i.e., sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile land-based systems) in another. The language, prepared jointly by ACDA and OSD staffs, is as follows:

DEF 12-45

"Each Party undertakes not to develop, produce, test, or deploy sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based ABM launchers or ABM radars. Each Party undertakes not to develop, produce, test, or deploy ABM systems using devices other than ABM interceptor missiles /or ABM radars/ to perform the functions of these components."

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The OSD representative would like to delete the language in brackets.

Thus, ACDA would like the prohibition to cover development, testing, production and deployment of any non-fixed land-based ABM systems or components, and all future ABM systems. OSD would exclude from the prohibition devices for future fixed land-based systems other than ABM radars which perform the functions of such radars. The JCS, on the other hand, would like, essentially, no prohibition placed on ABM system development, testing, production and deployment. Five alternatives cover the spectrum; total prohibition to no prohibition.

Alternative 1 - Ban development, testing, production, and deployment.

This alternative would severely restrict the ability of the US to investigate new concepts and to conduct the research and development which would probably be necessary to establish system feasibility. It would equally restrict the Soviets if they complied with the ban; however, there may be serious problems in verifying such a ban, at least up to the point where full-scale systems testing is conducted.

Alternative 2 - Ban testing, production, and deployment.

This alternative would permit research investigation of new ABM concepts, although the US might have practical problems in getting R&D funds if deployment were banned. It would not allow a determination of feasibility and reliability through testing. There is a big question at this stage as to what type of testing would be required and how far development could go with tests which might not be detected.

Alternative 3 - Ban production and deployment.

This alternative would place no restrictions on the research and development of new ABM concepts; hence, both

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sides would be free fully to investigate and test new concepts. However, if the Soviets were to conduct the tests that would be necessary to establish system feasibility and system reliability, we would expect to detect such a test program. Although we might not be absolutely sure since we might not know for sure what a "future ABM system" would look like. Indicators derived from their test program probably would allow us to detect and identify operational deployment on any significant scale assuming distinctive facilities were required. We would probably be unable to determine if components of a new ABM system (similarly as with a current system) were being produced, and would know this only after deployment was underway.

Alternative 4 - Ban only deployment.

This alternative is the same as 3 above, except that it would not ban production, which would be difficult if not impossible to verify.

Alternative 5 - No ban on future ABM systems.

This alternative would permit each side to develop and deploy new defensive systems based on components other than ABM launchers, interceptors and radars. This would mean, in essence, that the SALT agreement would limit one type of ABM system but would permit the deployment of others capable of performing the same function.

It is theoretically possible that an inexpensive and effective ABM defense could, in time, be developed that would, if deployed on both sides, be regarded as a contribution to strategic stability. However, this possibility is highly theoretical and to insist that this be left explicitly open in an agreement on defense limitation would probably jeopardize the prospects of such an agreement and be justifiably criticized by the public, the press and Congress. It should not be precluded that (if it ever appears such a defense is a practical possibility and would lead to enhanced stability) an agreement could be renegotiated.

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Substantial arguments can be made on both sides of the issue of permitting or banning future systems. At the same time, there are enough variables and intangibles involved, in what essentially amounts to trying to predict the future, that no amount of study is likely to produce a technical basis for changing currently held views. The underlying element is a political one and a political decision is required. Several weeks ago Ambassador Smith briefly outlined his views on the subject in SALT 804 (Tab B), which in my view come closest to the mark. The considerations he suggests, it seems to me, are the central factors to which most weight should be given in reaching a decision. Smith's points essentially are:

-- The general public expectations at home and abroad that the aim of SALT was to limit ABM systems and not just existing types of hardware.

-- Unless ABM systems in general are covered, competition in "futures" is likely to produce a similar situation to the one SALT is trying to limit.

-- This fact will be recognized and criticism of a narrow approach, particularly in Congress, could be severe. The basic purpose of SALT is to enhance stability, whereas allowing competition in future systems will be destabilizing.

-- It is easier to control weapons before they come into being than after.

Therefore, I conclude that we cannot afford--nor, I believe, can the Soviets--to permit a range of possible future ABM systems while limiting one type of current system. This would lead to uncertainties which would only serve to undercut the viability of any agreement and would have the effect of heating up rather than damping down the arms race.

I would recommend that the Department of State support a complete prohibition (i.e., on development, testing, production and deployment) on any sea-based,

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air-based, space-based and mobile land-based ABM systems or components, current or future.

With respect to future fixed land-based ABM systems, I recommend that State support a position slightly different from either ACDA or OSD, involving a prohibition on testing of ABM systems or components using devices other than ABM interceptor missiles or ABM radars to perform the functions of these components in an ABM mode, and a prohibition on production and deployment. While there could be verification uncertainties with respect to the testing of possible future systems not yet conceived, on balance I believe it is in our net security interest to impose such a restraint on Soviet programs. This would not limit research and development of new ABM concepts for fixed land-based systems, enabling us to continue such programs in this area to avoid technical and operational surprise. In practice, however, our R&D programs might be limited by Congressional action or budgetary constraints, on the grounds that "if you cannot deploy it, why develop it?" The same constraints might not apply to the Soviets. It might be possible to retain adequate levels of R&D, if there were a safeguard program as in the case of the Limited Test Ban Treaty.

Since we could probably detect and identify a major test program, which would be necessary for any substantial deployment program, it would be in our interest to ban testing of new ABM concepts (systems or their components) in an ABM mode. Once a new ABM system had been developed and tested there would be considerable uncertainty concerning deployment intentions. A ban on production would be useful for its inhibitory effect, even though it would be difficult if not impossible to verify.

Attachments:

- Tab A - "Future ABM Systems"
- Tab B - SALT 804

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Drafted: INR/RSC: *FHP* FHPerez/PM/DCA:RAMartin: *W* sac  
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