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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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MINUTES
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Monday, January 19, 1976

TIME: 9:57 a.m. to 11:40 a.m.

PLACE: Cabinet Room, The White House

SUBJECT: SALT

Principals

The President
Vice President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown
Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Fred Ikle
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Brent Scowcroft

Other Attendees

White House: Mr. Richard Cheney, Assistant to the President
Mr. William G. Hyland, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

State: Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson
Mr. Helmut Sonnenfeldt

Defense: Deputy Secretary William Clements
Dr. James P. Wade

CIA: Mr. Carl Duckett

NSC Staff: Dr. Roger C. Molander RCM

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By [illegible] NARA Date 5/25/99

President Ford: This is the last meeting before Henry goes off to Moscow after my State of the Union Address and I want to review the situation as we have laid it out and insure that there is no uncertainty about our position. Henry described our position to Dobrynin last Wednesday or Thursday, the modification of Option IV, which brought from Dobrynin a negative reaction. Nevertheless, they have the position and Henry will go there and start from that position and do his utmost to argue for that position. Nevertheless, he is in a position to go from Modified IV to Variant IV which gives them the right to leave out the 2400 120-130 Bisons and Bears as I understand it.

Secretary Rumsfeld: It's 115.

President Ford: I won't argue the numbers, whatever it is. Anyway, after Henry negotiates on Wednesday on the basis of Modified IV and Variant IV, and gets a feel for their attitudes and reactions, under our agreed procedures, he will communicate with me Wednesday evening our time. From those comments I will get Bill Clements, Admiral Holloway, Fred Ikle, and Bill Colby together to discuss the content of Henry's communication. Following that meeting, we expect to go to Option III. We can't be definite, but that's the plan. It would be particular helpful if we could get an aggregate of 2300, in which case the upper limit on the Backfire could be raised to 400 under Option III. I have talked to General Brown and it seems to me that Option III with 300-400 on Backfire and an equal aggregate on surface ships makes a good tradeoff. It is my impression that this will be a good position if we can't get the Soviets to agree to either of the other two options. If the Soviets say "no" on all of our first three positions, then we would go to Option I. Several variants of this option have been suggested. Some have suggested an October 3, 1977 deadline for negotiating Backfire and cruise missiles, but those things will have to be discussed with the Soviets. With those brief remarks, I'd like to ask Henry to offer his comments.

Secretary Kissinger: I presented the Modified Option IV to Dobrynin. He, of course, had no instructions, and thus, his reaction was on the basis of what he knew about their basic position. He said that in his judgment, there was no possibility of their counting Backfire -- that this was a major policy issue. He didn't reject it; however, he thought that before I got there, it might be rejected; however, this has not happened, so he was wrong about that. He said that Option IV, in any variant which counted Backfire in the 2400, was simply not doable. Thus if we are going

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to stick with a variant of Option IV, then we would be better off to get Alex Johnson to propose it in Geneva, since we will not be able to penetrate the top leadership of the Soviets with such a proposal. We would be proposing to count Backfire, even though they have already rejected the offer I gave Gromyko in September, which was more generous. However, I suppose it's entirely possible that they might accept a proposal like Variant IV, since I've never heard any official comment on their position on the Bear and Bison variants.

Ambassador Johnson: We've had considerable discussion on that issue. They've countered our position by proposing that there be equal aggregates on tankers and a provision that bans conversion of tankers to heavy bombers, but I don't know how high that went in the Kremlin.

Secretary Kissinger: Anyway, I had no problem putting forth such a proposal to Dobrynin and as I indicated, he said he thought it would be rejected. I then proposed Option I as a way out to Dobrynin. Dobrynin said that there was no possibility that they would accept the MIRV counting rule without cruise missile limitations and that they made acceptance of any MIRV counting rule depending on such limitations.

President Ford: You mean on ALCMs and SLCMs?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, they had made it dependent on those limitations when they initially put it forward. I asked Dobrynin whether a compromise was possible on a different basis. He said that, in his judgment, they might possibly agree to deferral if Backfire were out and if we could settle on the ALCM part of our proposal, then we might be able to leave SLCMs out.

Ambassador Johnson: We might find a compromise between their proposal and our proposal if we set a fixed time for the agreement within your term, say January 15 or January 1.

Secretary Kissinger: It would be a hellish price to write such an agreement that says that we'll settle on January 1. Dobrynin spoke without authority; I can't believe the Soviet Ambassador really speaks with authority of the leadership. I had tried deferral before and it had been rejected the first time. This appears to be some give, but I don't believe that they would go for a long deferral.

President Ford: Any comments, Nelson?

Vice President Rockefeller: Henry did not mention land-based cruise missiles. In a meeting of one of your advisory groups, one of the members said that he was worried about their capability being different from ours. In particular, with respect to civil defense, [redacted] They are equal to us in ballistic missiles, but in cruise missiles, which are based on electronics only, they are way ahead. They also are developing the SS-20 and the SS-16 and have in the work mobile ICBMs. I feel, and I have talked to Henry about this, that we should have the right to substitute for ICBMs cruise missiles which can reach the Soviet Union. [redacted] we would be able to reach the Soviet Union with cruise missiles in five years. We could use mobile launch from highways and confuse their air defenses; this does present us with the only real possibility of a breakthrough. I read the notes prepared for you for the meeting and on page 2, paragraph 6, it recommends that we move to a lower range on land-based cruise missiles. I don't think we should retain the right to substantial deployment in this area. I know this is a later arrival, but I think that it's important that we save this program.

I could not get an estimate from the Joint Chiefs on our own intercontinental kill capability to compare with the figures I've just given.

General Brown: Both the CIA and we have calculated this capability and we have different numbers since it's done on a different basis. However, there are numbers given in the NIE on which there is general agreement.

President Ford: It's an interest point.

Brent Scowcroft: If we worry about the Soviets increasing their capability, they might very well add intercontinental cruise missiles. It's really not in our interest to permit intercontinental cruise missiles. We need more ICBM capability, not cruise missile capability, to change the force ratios.

Vice President Rockefeller: I am only passing on the views of Teller and his associates who are looking down the road. They are not recommending

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that the Defense Department start a program; however, they feel that this is the most exciting and significant development to emerge recently and an area in which we have a real advantage over the Soviets.

President Ford: How long will it take for a 5500 kilometer cruise missile to reach its target?

Secretary Kissinger: Eight hours.

Vice President Rockefeller: With the swing-wing, we could cut the time in half. It would cost a few million dollars for each missile, compared to tens of million for ballistic missiles.

President Ford: George, as you envision the development of the intercontinental cruise missiles, would you want to substitute cruise missiles for ballistic missiles?

General Brown: We have not talked about this; however, we see a real problem in going from subsonic to supersonic flight for intercontinental cruise missiles. It would be hard to know whether it would be practical until we have completed advanced development. There could be advantages to a mobile system in a great deal of situations; for example, they land-based in Europe. However, we have not ruled out other deployment areas. If the Soviets are willing to bring down the range limit to 2500 km, we would still be able to get a land-based cruise missile program in Europe.

Secretary Kissinger: I think a land-based cruise missile program in Europe will be limited by the ideology of people who don't want nuclear weapons in Europe, not by SALT. I agree that we should look ahead in our thinking but I question what land-based cruise missiles could be used for, except possibly for accuracy in the attack of hard targets. But they're not good for hard targets which you want to hit in the first hour or half hour, not in four hours. They don't have a first-strike capability if they can only get there in four hours. It would also certainly push the cost up if they were supersonic and highly accurate. You would then have basically pilotless aircraft, not the type of cruise missile that we now have. I think that we should bring down the range limit on intercontinental cruise missiles if we can get it. We would be better off if we could get a lower range limit rather than keeping open an option which has no application other than attacking hard targets.

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General Brown: I agree with the point that Henry made. You really want to attack hard targets in the first 20 minutes. In addition, the cost of going supersonic will be four to six times the cost over subsonic because of the severe structural problems.

President Ford: To go 5500 miles supersonically would be a tough mechanical burden.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: It would be like trying to build an airplane.

Vice President Rockefeller: I only mentioned this because PFIAB thinks it's attractive.

General Brown: You say Ed Teller is pushing it?

Vice President Rockefeller: I only mentioned this because Teller suggested the atom bomb and he was right about that and the posture we are in now is far more serious.

Director Colby: With respect to the comment the Vice President made on civil defense, we have been watching this quite closely. They are making preparations to protect their command structure. There are no indications right now that they are doing more than that; however, but with respect to the discussion earlier, they could go to even more evacuation. If there is a buildup in the amount of the population that can be evacuated and if they have considerable warning time, then it could be accomplished. If they send all these people to the country, they would have to be organized with stocks of food, etc.

President Ford: They're not as far along as the Chinese.

Director Colby: It's hard to tell.

Vice President Rockefeller: They have 40 flag officers and 45,000 troops working on civil defense.

Dr. Ikle: But none of the civil defense will be able to protect their industrial plants.

Vice President Rockefeller: Even the industrial plants can be protected. When we studied this 20 years ago, we found that you could rehabilitate

if you mothballed your used machinery tools and have them available to bring back. The Germans were very successful at this.

President Ford: Let me ask this question. As I understand, it's the question of a range limit on cruise missiles. If the range limit is 5500 kilometers on land-based cruise missiles, won't we then have a verification problem on the range limits on ALCMs and SLCMs and cruise missiles on surface ships?

Director Colby: Yes, Mr. President. There is already enough of a verification problem on cruise missiles anyway. If long-range tests were permitted from land-based launchers, it would be difficult to tell if long-range cruise missiles are deployed on other launchers.

President Ford: Where do we stand now on land-based cruise missiles?

Secretary Kissinger: They have proposed 5500 kilometers. With such a limit, we could test with a heavier warhead within the 5500 kilometer test limit and still have an inherent intercontinental capability.

Ambassador Johnson: We have accepted 5500 kilometers in Geneva.

Secretary Kissinger: If we stick with that position, Ed Teller's problem is settled. However, if we go to 2500 kilometers, we could put 2500 kilometers cruise missiles in the United Kingdom, in Europe, in Guam, and in Alaska and cover the Soviet Union.

Vice President Rockefeller: I think your argument's wrong; we would be better to have them in the U.S.

Brent Scowcroft: We could saturate the Soviet Union from the forward launch areas.

Secretary Kissinger: Brent's right. We could saturate the Soviet Union. I personally favor cruise missiles for penetration and for the land-based European option. With the 2500 kilometers under Option IV, which has not yet been accepted, we could cover all of European Russia from Western Europe and they would have no equivalent system.

Dr. Ikle: The question is what the Soviets would tolerate under SALT. They have made a point about U.S. systems deployed in Europe.

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Secretary Rumsfeld: The dilemma is not a question of technology where we are clearly ahead in an important new area. Human beings tend to deal with problems in the abstract. We become ahead and then we want to restrain the other side as much as possible. The defense of the agreement will be much easier with parallelism on range. Ratification will be a son-of-a-gun on the Hill in any case. Because of the interchangeability of cruise missiles, it will weaken our case on the Hill if we have different range limits.

President Ford: On one side, verification argues for a range limit of 2500 km, but on the basis of developing weapon systems, it would appear that 5500 km would be desirable.

Secretary Clements: 5500 km would not provide substantial capability. Five-eighths of 5500 is only 3,000 nautical miles which is not substantial for an intercontinental missile. The second thing, Mr. President, is that there is no way we can anticipate 1990-2000 and know what the technology will be like then. With respect to the ALCM and SLCM, these both fly this year, but they will be obsolete as the dodo by 1985. By 2000, we don't know what the technology will be like at supersonic speeds. We can't anticipate looking from the ground up what the limits of technology will be in a whole new field. Cruise missiles is a whole new frontier.

Vice President Rockefeller: And it's the best one we've got.

President Ford: We want to be sure that we can accept counting surface ship cruise missile platforms in the MIRV limit.

General Brown: It's the ship itself which carries cruise missiles of greater than 600 km which counts?

President Ford: Yes, we would count every ship of that type as a MIRV.

General Brown: Count every ship?

President Ford: In other words, a ship which carries cruise missiles between 600 and 2500 km would be counted. How many cruise missiles of 2500 km range could such a ship have?

Secretary Kissinger: We would have to limit these cruise missiles to some number, say 15. Then the ratio of cruise missiles to Backfire would be something like 1.5 to 1.

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Secretary Clements: We haven't yet discussed the specific number.

Secretary Kissinger: In our last discussion, we discussed 15. There's no sense going any higher. They will not bet increased beyond that. At the last VP, 12 cruise missiles per ship was mentioned. We might establish a ratio of 2:1. It stands to reason that we would not get the Soviets to agree to an unlimited number of surface ships in return for a limit on Backfire.

President Ford: If we give them 300 Backfire, and if they do not have a strategic bombing capability, then we will have a marginal system and they will have a marginal system which will be equivalent.

Secretary Kissinger: In Option III, surface ships would not count as MIRVs, but there would be a ceiling on the number of ships and on the number of cruise missiles. In this case, we might have to count 75 FB-111's as well. If they have 400 Backfire, we would then get 75 FB-111's.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Where did this come from?

General Brown: I urge not to do that. We're being double-dipped on that one.

Secretary Kissinger: There's no reason why they couldn't be in our count. We should stick with what we told them before. Our proposal in September was 300 Backfire and we would count 75 FB-111's. Schlesinger agreed to this. The idea was that we would count one SLCM for each Backfire.

Secretary Rumsfeld: The missiles would not be counted?

Secretary Kissinger: What was proposed was worked out with Schlesinger. He said he was willing to let Backfire run free if they would promise never to raise FBS again. The proposal in September called for 225 heavy bombers with ALCMs. We would be permitted 200 SLCMs on ships and we would count 75 FB-111's. Now we are talking about a proposal that really gives nothing to them. We would be permitted two SLCMs per Backfire; thus we have changed the balance in our favor on the SLCM count.

President Ford: (Pointing to a piece of paper.) There is the September proposal.

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Secretary Rumsfeld: I'd like to see a copy of that sometime.

Secretary Kissinger: (Reading from the paper provided by the President.) It was a limit of 300 heavy bombers with cruise missiles and it was to be a limit of 300 on Backfire and SLCMs as I said.

General Brown: Including the FB-111?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. We have offered that to them two or three times. It's really a minor problem.

General Brown: We do have some slack in the 2400.

Secretary Kissinger: In Option III, they would not be in the 2400. They would be hybrid systems. The 75 FB-111's would apply only under the limit of three or four hundred. I am saying this is a possibility. If the Soviets get 300-400 Backfire, and we get SLCMs up to 2500 km on ships at some ratio, we could offset 75 Backfire with FB-111's and offset the others with 650 SLCMs up to 2500 km range.

General Brown: I don't know what the right SLCM ratio to Backfire is. If I'm offsetting those systems, it would be hard to say how many SLCMs offset how many Backfire.

Secretary Kissinger: But there's an equal number of cruise missiles in the aggregate as Backfire.

General Brown: If there were a limit of 300 on the platforms, then there would never be a question of the balance.

Secretary Kissinger: I disagree with that; we'll never have 300 ships.

General Brown: As currently envisioned, we would have to strengthen the ship in order to put SLCMs on it and we couldn't put them on the ships with topedo tubes. I don't know how many launchers we could actually put on each ship.

President Ford: It's my impression that we could offset 300-400 Backfire with SLCMs. By cutting the number of ships on which we put cruise missiles of a certain number, we could improve the ratio.

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General Brown: Better than 1:1?

President Ford: 1:1 or 2:1 or whatever ratio. It's my impression that we could offset Backfire with cruise missiles in this manner.

Mr. Hyland: That's what the Verification Panel option was -- a choice between cruise missiles or Backfire for the Soviets. Two problems came out which led us to that. If the Soviets were permitted the choice, they might deploy 275 Backfire and 25 surface ships. For that reason, it was decided that it would be best if they were forced to choose between the two.

Secretary Rumsfeld: You're referring to the Working Group, not the Verification Panel.

Mr. Hyland: This was the option developed in the Working Group and presented at the VP.

President Ford: It was my understanding that if they go to 300 Backfire, they are precluded from surface ship deployment.

Dr. Ikle: The choice was one or the other. It's really a question of the ratio -- a question of what rationale you would give. Payload is not the only differential.

Secretary Kissinger: We give the B-52 10,000 pounds and the Backfire 20,000 pounds.

General Brown: It's the question of how it's loaded.

President Ford: As a practical matter, how many surface ships do we now have in mind would be deployed with cruise missiles?

Secretary Rumsfeld: Mr. President, there's no way of answering that question. As we have indicated, the technology is very new. There's no way to get anyone to come with 50 or any other number. As for an answer to your question, we will know in five years.

General Brown: There are no more than 200 ships today that could take such cruise missiles.

President Ford: I can't believe we'd have 200, that we would deploy cruise missiles on all 200.

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General Brown: I agree, but I'd have to go back to Bill's point about future capability.

Secretary Kissinger: We are in an ever-never land here. No one has the foggiest idea what kind of cruise missile program we would have on surface ships. The agreement will end in eight years at the end of 1985. If we agree to 50 ships, the only serious criticism people will make will be that there will be no way that we can achieve 50 ships if the IOC is 1982. In any case, if we drop the surface ship platform limit from Option III, there will be no basis for an agreement.

Secretary Rumsfeld: How many cruise missiles are carried on the Backfire?

Brent Scowcroft: There's not any now.

General Brown: I go back to the question of the ratio between Backfire and SLCMs. They could have as many as eight bombs on each Backfire.

Brent Scowcroft: My impression is that with 50 ships and 15 launchers, we would have 750 launchers to offset the Backfires.

President Ford: How does this SLCM deployment compare with 300 Backfire in military capability?

General Brown: I think it would be less, Mr. President, since you could load each Backfire with eight bombs.

Secretary Kissinger: That SLCM limit would be on the number of launchers.

Brent Scowcroft: There would be no limit on the actual number of SLCMs.

Secretary Kissinger: I'll make one flat prediction: without SALT, the number of Backfires will be much greater than 300, whereas the number of SLCMs on surface ships will be less than 50.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Are we talking launchers or missiles?

Mr. Hyland: We'd want to fudge that to avoid a limit on the number of missiles.

Secretary Kissinger: Theoretically, we could have more than one ICBM missile per launcher.

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Ambassador Johnson: We have agreement on ICBM reload capability -- it is banned.

Secretary Kissinger: In SALT II, but not in SALT I.

Ambassador Johnson: That's correct. There are no limitations on reload capability under SALT I.

Mr. Hyland: Mr. President, the loading on each Backfire is .....

General Brown: .....

Director Colby: ..... The last chart leaves out those Backfire in naval aviation. Under normal use, these actually would be left out of any Soviet attack. As the Soviets would look at it, it would be as in the last chart.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Bill, if you look at the question of launchers versus SLCMs, doesn't this raise the question of "nuclear-armed" versus "armed?"

Director Colby: If we counted all possible launchers, we could really have a bundle. We have to guess at the load for Backfire and we assume .....

General Brown: .....

President Ford: Do ALCMs of range up to 2500 km obviate the need for SRAM?

General Brown: No, we will still need SRAM. When we get ALCMs, then we will have to develop the tactics to go with it. SRAM gives a defense

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suppression capability for the bombers. The cruise missile does help me, but it helps the guy behind me more. .....
.....
..... ALCMs would not set aside the need for SRAMs.

Secretary Rumsfeld: .....
missiles?

General Brown: .....

Secretary Rumsfeld: Would any SRAM launcher capable of launching a cruise missile be counted?

Secretary Kissinger: You would not count the launcher but the airplane.

Dr. Ikle: Mr. President, there is a serious verification problem on all cruise missiles. We should look on this as a limit on us to get an agreement. We should not claim that it will limit the Soviets except in a weak manner. You can get lost in a morass in cruise missile verification. We need to look at cruise missile limits as a buy to get an agreement. The Russians look at verification differently; they are much less concered about it.

Secretary Rumsfeld: There are other things which also cause arguments in the ratification of the agreement.

Brent Scowcroft: If the Soviets are five years behind us in cruise missiles, then when the agreement expires, they will have none.

Director Colby: What is important is the verification of a strategically significant add-on. Our chance of picking up a strategically significant cruise missile deployment in violation of the agreement is very good. We would be able to use both agents and photographys for this purpose.

Vice President Rockefeller: I totally agree with Henry on the difficulty of obtaining Congressional support in financing the cruise missiles programs in the absence of an agreement. My only concern is the limitations on land-based cruise missiles. I am concern that some hard-line scientists will oppose a SALT agreement which has such limitations. My only thing is this limit on land-based cruise missiles.

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President Ford: You are saying that on Option I or on any option, you prefer no ban on any intercontinental cruise missiles?

Secretary Kissinger: The only difference is the addition of a fuel tank.

Dr. Ikle: But that's not legitimate. We couldn't have such a program.

Secretary Kissinger: We could go to 3000 km and then have the capability to build up to 4000 or 5000.

Secretary Clements: There would be no limits on technology.

Secretary Kissinger: If you could do unlimited testing at 3000 km range, this would leave open all options for deployment in the late-1980's. The extrapolation for cruise missiles is better than with ICBMs. We accepted the ban above 5500 km several months ago without any objections from anyone. If we want to open up possibility of intercontinental cruise missiles in the future, this might be done, since this agreement will only last until 1985.

Dr. Ikle: Mr. President, it is not clear why we would want cruise missiles on land-based launchers anyway. Ships or submarines are much better platforms, since they would be more survivable.

Vice President Rockefeller: But the intercontinental cruise missiles would be mobile land-based.

President Ford: Well, I think that the procedure that we outlined is the proper one.

Secretary Kissinger: I want to be candid about this. I will not be the fall guy for this group. We must be specific about what we have agreed. Are we going to propose a limit of 40-50 ships?

General Brown: I think that's reasonable and can probably be defended with whatever formula we come out with.

Secretary Kissinger: If I talk to Brezhnev, I've got to give him some figures. If not, the trip will just abort and he will think that I will have been sent just to give us an excuse to toughen relations. If I go in a mode of stonewalling, he'll think its to give us an excuse to go back and say detente has failed. By this discussion, if I say to him that the numbers

would be agreed later, then it would be better if it were done by Alex in Geneva and not me with Brezhnev. Rather, the numbers must be agreed upon if I am going to go to Moscow. Otherwise, Brezhnev will go to the Politburo and they will say what's the ratio and if he can't answer them, they will oppose the agreement.

The Politburo will probably also ask why if they don't count FBS in the agreement, why Backfire should be counted.

General Brown: Hopefully, we will be able to count two cruise missiles for Backfire.

Secretary Kissinger: I concluded from this session last time that the preference was for 15 cruise missiles per ship up to 2500 kilometers with unlimited cruise missiles below 600 km. This could be translated into a formula for the Soviets.

General Brown: The point is that we would have 2:1 ratio between SLCMs and Backfire. However, we should note that we do not have enough SLCMs authorized to fill our options.

President Ford: What confuses me is that when you go to Option IV, you count the platforms in the MIRV limit. If the platforms are the ships, are the number of cruise missiles also limited?

Secretary Kissinger: Only the number of launchers.

President Ford: On surface ships, Option IV would appear to me to be more restrictive than Option III.

Secretary Rumsfeld: This is probably true.

President Ford: If you count each surface ship with SLCMs as a platform in the 1320 limit, then there are weaker limits on surface-ship SLCMs in Option III as compared to Option IV.

Dr. Ikle: That's probably right.

Mr. Hyland: However, Option IV is tougher on Backfire. They are asked to count each Backfire after October 3, 1977 in the 2400, whereas in Option III, we would pull back from that position and establish a general ratio between Backfires and cruise missiles or an upper limit on the number of Backfires.

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President Ford: On the basis of actual military capability, if this were staffed out, from this aspect, would Option IV be more restrictive on our military capability than Option III?

General Brown: But as Bill said, in Option IV, the Backfire is counted in the aggregate.

President Ford: After October of 1977 which I understand would allow the first 120 to be free.

Secretary Kissinger: If we throw in the Bear and Bison tankers and other variants, there would be, in effect, 235 Backfire free. If we give them 235 Backfire free in Option IV by not counting the variants, then there is not that much difference between the Backfire limits in Option III and Option IV.

Director Colby: Don't we already have an understanding on the variants?

Secretary Kissinger: No, but I'm just trying to give an explanation of the difference between Option III and Option IV. We should keep in mind that if I raise the "variant" issue with Brezhnev, he will not understand it.

Secretary Rumsfeld: I'm amazed if that's true. These aircraft have been extensively discussed in Geneva.

Secretary Kissinger: That's true, but you can't assume that Brezhnev will have heard about it. What I'm trying to say is that on the basis of counting the variants, the Soviets are permitted only 65 more Backfire in III. Under Option IV, you will, in effect, give 235 free Backfire; 115 because we would not count the Bear and Bison variants which could be converted to bombers as easily as it would be to use Backfires in intercontinental missions.

President Ford: But in IV, we would count the surface ships which would take away from the 1320 missiles and bombers; thus, Option IV would appear to be less advantageous to us militarily than Option III. It has to work out that way.

Secretary Kissinger: Our basic problem is pure public relations. No U.S. programs will be limited by this agreement. The problem is how to present it. There would be more Backfires without SALT than under these limitations. We would not have 50 surface ships with cruise missiles by '83 or '84. George's point is how do we present it.

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Secretary Rumsfeld: Your point's valid. The presentation for Option IV modified would be different from that for Option III. There are other pieces and other considerations, such as what may be the implication for future SALT agreements. We should discuss how we handle Backfire in terms of it being a "grey area" system and the precedent that it sets for future negotiations -- especially under Option IV, although it would be easier to defend than the other options.

Secretary Kissinger: It would be easier, but the problem is how to get the Soviets to accept it. We need to analyze the programs affected in terms of strategic situation and where we would be without SALT for every option.

General Brown: We give on some of our options by including heavy bombers; we'll probably be up to 1320 by 1985.

Secretary Kissinger: But you don't like Poseidon anyway.

General Brown: You're right; we prefer Trident to Poseidon.

Secretary Kissinger: There would be only one year in which you would probably be squeezed and you could probably stretch the Trident program for one year to accommodate this.

General Brown: I don't assume we'll be in a position to go over 1320 before 1985.

Secretary Kissinger: We should have plans developed on the presumption that there will be new negotiations on what happens after 1985.

Secretary Rumsfeld: There's another question which is raised if we reserved the right to deploy mobiles. The impact would depend on the size of the aggregate.

Secretary Kissinger: If we leave the mobile ICBMs option open, then there is nothing in the agreement which would constrain our programs. From the standpoint of SALT, then the decision for the President is whether there is a military advantage to banning or permitting mobiles. Since the Soviets used to favor permitting mobiles and are now arguing that their deployment should be banned, we must conclude that they are willing to give up mobiles in an agreement, at least through 1985.

President Ford: Is it our view that we want mobiles?

General Brown: If we want to protect our ICBMs, yes.

Secretary Kissinger: If we kill mobiles on surface ships and leave the others open, the Navy will be the ones who scream.

Secretary Rumsfeld: We should leave the option open for mobiles.

Secretary Kissinger: We really don't have to discuss that now. I think that the question of mobile ICBMs should be deferred at this time and left out of all of the options.

Vice President Rockefeller: And we should also leave open the option of land-based mobile cruise missiles.

Secretary Kissinger: In my view, we could accept the 5500 km and when the agreement lapses, retain the option to deploy after 1985 if we need it; however, there is no need to retain this option through 1985. The 5500 km range would allow as much technology to go forward as is needed.

Vice President Rockefeller: Because they're guided missiles.

Secretary Kissinger: Another option is to modify the Soviet idea of deferral -- the thing Dobrynin proposed to me. We could make a five-year agreement on Backfire and cruise missiles -- say, until 1982. We could allow the Soviets 275, and maybe 250 Backfire while we would agree to have no more than 25 surface ships with launchers. This constrains us not at all since our IOC is not before 1980 at the earliest, and we would not have 25 ships by 1982. This would give us maximum leverage in the follow-on negotiations.

Vice President Rockefeller: What about land-mobile cruise missiles?

Secretary Kissinger: This would be no problem up to 2500 km.

President Ford: When will their cruise missiles become operative?

Secretary Kissinger: They would not have long-range cruise missiles for at least five years.

Dr. Ikle: A five-year agreement on cruise missiles would also have the advantage of allowing time to see how difficult cruise missiles verification is going to be.

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Secretary Kissinger: We would then have a starting point from which to trade constraints on their cruise missiles for constraints on our cruise missiles.

President Ford: Let me make this request. Take Modified IV, every option seeks in some way to exchange Backfires for cruise missiles on surface ships. We need a military estimate of the impact of the 115 Backfires difference between IV and III versus counting platforms on ships in the MIRV limit. We need a military estimate of the difference between III and IV where you would in III compare the permitted Backfire versus the surface ships cruise missile limit using 50 platforms and 15 launchers per platform.

Secretary Clements: Then we should also do an option with 100 ships and 250 ships.

President Ford: This is a question that will be raised in any justification of the agreement. What is the military difference between these two proposals? My non-technical visceral feeling is that IV Modified is less desirable from a technical standpoint than Option III.

Secretary Kissinger: My analysis of the Foreign policy situation is the following. The trip is being made at the request of the Soviets; we have changed the date on them three different times and have made a public statement that we would be willing to make a major effort to settle the outstanding issues. They must assume that we are going there to settle the issues, not just to discuss them or to nit-pick. Otherwide, we could just as well have the proposal put forward in Geneva. However, the way their system works, is in order for them to accept Option IV modified, which I personally have no problem putting forward, would require an enormous change in their current position.

Brent Scowcroft: They made their last statement after we had given them Modified IV.

Secretary Kissinger: In that case, if they accept Modified Option IV, there would be no problem. But if they don't accept it, then we could give them the variant of Option IV and on Wednesday night, they would be able to have time to translate it into Russian and have a Politburo meeting on Thursday. But there's no way that we would get anything done unless it follows that sort of program, nor do I really know what they are likely to do after they reject Option IV as they are likely to do. As I always do,

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I will cable back at the end of the day what happened on Wednesday. There must be some flexibility to go to a variation of Option I or a five-year agreement or Option III. There must be some latitude or it will be a very strained situation. They are certain to draw conclusions about our performance; if they conclude that I was only sent there to stonewall, they will conclude that we are in a new phase in our relationship. They can have Angola fail, but they can't have a SALT stalemate on their plate simultaneously. If they are in a condition of maximum readiness to settle, then there's a question of what they will do to reach an agreement. I don't know what it will be.

General Brown: The only thing they know is Option IV or Modified Option I.

Secretary Rumsfeld: There's a possibility that they could offer us a counterproposal.

Secretary Kissinger: In the whole history of the arms control negotiations, they have never made a reasonable counterproposal. When a decision is made by the Politburo, that decision is cast in concrete. They are much more likely to give us a variation of our own proposal. If they accept Option IV in principle but propose different numbers, what do I do then? Suppose they come back and say they will want 250 Backfire and are willing to count all Backfire above that. At that point, what do I say? Nothing? But I really can't give you any idea what their response will be.

President Ford: Well, Henry, I think you have to have some flexibility. We've put forward Modified IV and we can go to Variant IV next -- and you know that you can always to to Option I with, say January 1, 1979 as a target date, or to a five-year agreement. We know that Option III is a possibility and as you proceed, we can start back here moving to a decision on what kind of flexibility you might put forward. You should communicate to me your recommendation on the best way to proceed.

You are going there, not for a stalemate, but for the purpose of getting an agreement. If we don't get an agreement, that is the worst of all. If we don't have an agreement, both strategic and conventional requirements will strain the defense budget and there's no assurance that we can get the required budget to Congress if we ask them for more funds. The worst of all would be no agreement in my judgment. You have to have some flexibility without prejudging yet where we will go. With flexibility and communication and judgment from here, I think we can do it. The trip is needed and desirable. There isn't any question about it; no agreement is the worst possibility.

Vice President Rockefeller: I agree, and in that agreement, I think we should maintain the flexibility to keep the Soviets at 5500 km on land-based cruise missiles.

Secretary Rumsfeld: No agreement is the worst option -- if you mean within the scope of those options which we are considering. However, a worse option is a bad agreement. As far as what Henry said goes, the only fall guy in this is you. It's your judgment which will be called into question. This discussion is not nit-picking; to the extent that our relationship with the Soviet Union is to be durable, we have to be sure that we get a good agreement -- thus we are not nit-picking, but demonstrating our seriousness of purpose.

The level of deterrence suitable for Brezhnev is not necessary the level of deterrence suitable for us. We can now see the difference between these options. The position we take must be fashioned in a manner which can be sold to Congress. It would be more damaging to go with a bad position than to delay in going forward with a proposal to the Soviets. We must keep in mind the problems that we will have in the Congress. It will be tough to get any agreement through.

Secretary Kissinger: I want to emphasize that we must be precise in what we are proposing to the Soviets. I can't tell Brezhnev that we want to limit Backfire to a level of 300 in return for a limit on the number on surface ships which will be agreed later. We must give him our side of this issue.

Secretary Rumsfeld: One of the ~~things that~~ serves us well is our ability to discuss these issues in a forthcoming manner. I don't know whether it will be disasterous for the detente if the key details are not worked while you are in Moscow. But if we can fashion a package that's acceptable on both sides, then we can come back and work further on the details.

Secretary Kissinger: I'm not saying everything has to be agreed. But Brezhnev has to sell it to the Politburo. You can't tell him that you'll let him know in 72 hours what the number on our side is or to tell him that we'll do it in Geneva. That's just not doable. It all goes to Geneva eventually for working out the details. I was there three times before Vladivostok. If we are approaching each other, then there will be no problem. But if they perceive that I'm stonewalling, then they and we will have to draw the obvious conclusions. In that case, we would be better off to give them a proposal in Geneva than to have me to go to Moscow.

President Ford: Let me just make some concluding comments. Substantively, we should try and get the best agreement we can. If we can get an agreement that can be substantively defended, then we should do it. It will be a tough political atmosphere and some people will be inclined to play politics with it; but if we can defend the agreement substantively, then we can win. I want to emphasize the substance, not the political aspects. If we can get a good substantive agreement, then we should do it.

Secretary Kissinger: What I resent these days is that they're saying that SALT I was not carefully considered. They're claiming that it was not worked out in Helsinki, but rather by me in Moscow, which is a myth. I consulted with the JCS on all of the major issues and no American program was stopped, but in fact, they were acclerated. All American programs were left intact. The forces that were in being in 1972 were the results of decisions made in the 1960's. There is a myth that there was great White House pressure on the agencies to accept the agreement -- but only in the last few weeks did the White House really get involved.

Secretary Rumsfeld: You agree, however, Henry, that in the environment that we're in the public will always have 20-20 hind sight.

Secretary Kissinger: But if all the departments are behind it, it will be accepted.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Yes, but this agreement will be nit-picked and fly-specked.

Secretary Kissinger: This is, in part, due to no one in the Defense Department taking a strong position defending the SALT I agreements. The JCS supported it, Admiral Zumwalt supported it; I talked to Admiral Moorer separately about this agreement, and he asked that we go for the submarine limits which we did. That fact, and the fact that no American programs were stopped, and that some American programs were accelerated, are being lost sight of. There was no example of White House pressure in the course of negotiating the agreements. I defy anyone to produce one cable in which we pressured for something that was not acceptable to the rest of the community. I don't know if Wade was here then, but until 1972, it was the Delegation that was pushing us for an agreement.

President Ford: Let me reiterate. It is not in our interest to have no agreement, but we want a good substantive defensible SALT agreement. If we can't go to other people and say that this is a good agreement, then we shouldn't accept it; but it's up to us to defend it. Thank you all.

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