

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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MINUTES
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, January 21, 1976
TIME: 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Cabinet Room, The White House
SUBJECT: SALT

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Acting Secretary of State Joseph Sisco
Acting Secretary of Defense William Clements
Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral James L. Holloway III
Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Dr. Fred Ikle
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Brent Scowcroft

Other Attendees

White House: Mr. John Marsh, Counselor to the President
Mr. Richard Cheney, Assistant to the President
Lt Col Robert McFarlane, USMC, Military Assistant
to the Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs
State: Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson
JCS: Lt General Edward L. Rowny, USA
NSC Staff: Colonel Richard T. Boverie, USAF

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Classified by Brent Scowcroft

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With PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12958 Sec. 1.4 (b) (2) & (d)

MR 98-29, #48, NSC letter 2/10/99

President Ford: All of you have received a copy of Henry's message. (Note: A copy of the message is attached at Tab A.) Therefore, I don't have to go into it in detail with you and read it.

Brezhnev emphasized again that the Backfire could not be counted as a strategic weapon. Also, through General Kozlov, he gave us more specific information on its radius -- 2200 to 2400 km.

Brezhnev also proposed a ban on all land-based cruise missiles over 600 km.

Gromyko also told Henry that deferral was out of the question since this would be a unilateral favor to us, inasmuch as they did not believe that Backfire should be counted under any circumstances.

In light of Brezhnev's and Gromyko's remarks, Henry believes we should explore a modified version of Option III. His approach would put Backfire and surface ship SLCMs in a separate category of limitations which would run for only five years, from 1977 to 1982.

Henry would start out by proposing the inclusion in the separate category of 250 Backfires and about 25 surface ships with 10-15 launchers each. I believe this would permit the number of Backfire we anticipate will be produced.

Director Colby: Approximately. I think they would have about 340 in the inventory, and 375 in terms of total production.

President Ford: That is not significantly different.

Director Colby: Right.

President Ford: Brezhnev has come up for the first time with an idea to count the B-1 as three systems within the 1320 MIRV limit. This is a new gimmick. On the other hand, they have accepted our ALCM proposal.

I think, as I read Henry's suggested approach, rather than confronting Brezhnev on the issue of the number of Backfire in 1985, this proposal would not challenge Brezhnev on a position he is solid on, and backed by the Politburo. I would like to get from all of you your views. I realize you have not had much time to analyze this. We should explore the five year agreement.



I know the Navy, Jim (Admiral Holloway), plans around 10 SLCM launchers per ship -- no reason to go to 15?

Admiral Holloway: We have no surface ship SLCM program at this time. We have thought about a submarine program, but we haven't even looked at the figures for modifying surface ships. Our first request for funds would be in the FY 78 budget. The nuclear cruisers are the only ships now which can take cruise missiles without substantial alteration of the ship design. Therefore, we would only have six warships with SLCMs by the end of 1982.

President Ford: It was my impression that you could fire SLCMs from torpedo tubes, and that you have a number of surface ships with torpedo tubes.

Admiral Holloway:
.....
..... The surface tubes are just a canister to dump the torpedoes in the water. But SLCMs need considerable initial blast-off since they go airborne. We can carry more of the SLCMs in the strike cruiser. We can take our cruisers, formerly nuclear frigates, and put missile pods on them. The cruiser can handle eight missiles without degrading ship performance. We could put more on the Spruance class destroyer but we would have to take something else off, such as 8-inch guns, or helicopters. This would be difficult without a surface SLCM program. We have only attempted to be prepared. Putting them on the Spruance class destroyer would be very difficult.

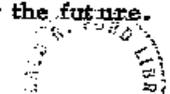
Secretary Clements: You could make block changes in the production line.

Dr. Ikle: How many surface SLCM platforms would you have?

Admiral Holloway: Six by 1982.

President Ford: This absolutely surprises me. In modified Option IV, Defense agreed to count surface ship SLCM platforms in the MIRV limit. How could you put this forth? I am dumbfounded by what you are saying today.

Admiral Holloway: We have looked at surface SLCMs for the future. However, the Navy plans are for submarines. We have no plans for surface SLCMs but we have looked at them to be prepared -- something for the future.



Dr. Ikle: Modified Option IV was for a 10 year period, not five years. That can affect how you look at surface SLCMs.

Secretary Clements: Same thing is true for land-based cruise missiles. We have no program for them. We have two programs -- one for submarines, and one for ALCMs.

President Ford: Is there any way to put SLCMs on surface ships -- for example put better tubes on the decks?

Admiral Holloway: Putting them on the decks would be a problem. They must be able to take the impulse from zero length launchers.

President Ford: Will you repeat again your program for frigates and DLGNs. How soon and how many for what purposes?

Admiral Holloway: We have nuclear cruisers which are authorized and funded. By 1982 we will have six of them.

President Ford: In the 1977 - 1982 span you will have six?

Admiral Holloway: Yes. We will have a capability the last two years of the period.

President Ford: What about the Spruance class destroyer?

Admiral Holloway: We have 30 authorized and funded. However, the shipyards are in trouble and the last one will be somewhere between two to four years late. We would have to take off the guns to put on SLCMs.

President Ford: Forward or aft guns?

Admiral Holloway: Forward guns. If we put SLCMs on the aft end, the helicopters would have to come off. I cannot give you a high confidence estimate on these ships. It would be nip and tuck if we have any of these ships altered, unless it becomes a program of the highest priority. I doubt that we could have more than two or three Spruance destroyers operational with SLCMs by 1982.

President Ford: Therefore, you could have eight to nine ships with a SLCM capability.



Admiral Holloway: That is probably on the low side. Let's say we could have 10-15 ships if we give the program the highest possible priority.

Secretary Clements: We could make block changes.

President Ford: You say you would "not have many" with a SLCM capability?

Admiral Holloway: We could put eight SLCMs on a ship. That would be reasonable. We could strip the ships, but then they would be vulnerable to attack -- only a floating barge with missiles. The ships need an inherent fighting capability to defend themselves.

We should also remember that when we talk about SLCMs on 20 ships, only one-third of those ships would be on station at any time. If we went to blue and gold crews like we do with our SSBNs, we could maintain perhaps up to 60 percent on station. Therefore, we might have 12 SLCM capable platforms on station if we had 20 ships.

In any event they would be limited with a 2500 km range. (Admiral Holloway takes out a chart and shows it to the President.) They would be limited in terms of where they could be stationed to hit the Soviet Union. On this chart you see one small circle near Crete where the ships could hit the USSR. There is another small circle near Iceland.

Brent Scowcroft: But that would be if we used the missiles for strategic purposes.

Secretary Clements: That's right, Brent. But the 2500 km limit also includes tactical use.

Dr. Ikle: I think this could be a benefit. We could say we would not be adding to the strategic arsenal -- that these are gray area systems.

Admiral Holloway: If we did this, we would have to have all our ships committed to a single purpose. They would be single purpose, dedicated platforms, which would be hard to make available for other purposes.

Secretary Clements: And if we would have to put them out there, they would be easy to spot and highly vulnerable. I hope we don't attach great hope to these as strategic platforms.

Brent Scowcroft: This was not addressed in any meeting. We have been talking about tactical use.



Secretary Clements: It is different if we talk about attack subs. An attack sub would have a strategic capability.

President Ford: Back to Option IV as presented, I gathered that we were equating Backfire with surface ship SLCMs with a 2400 km range. This means to me that DOD says the Backfire is not a strategic weapon either.

Admiral Holloway: No, that is not our intention. If Backfire is strategic and we address it in a separate compartment, we have to look at our offsetting capability -- surface SLCMs. If we have 25 ships with 10 missiles each, that gives us 250 SLCMs. If that an equivalent balance with 250 Backfires? I don't see it as equivalent with the Backfire. The Backfire could carry four 3.5 megaton bombs for a total of 14 megatons per Backfire.

President Ford: You can reload the surface ships, but you can't reload the Backfire.

Admiral Holloway: No, sir. Eight pods would be it. Only the strike cruiser might have a reload capability if we develop it.

Submarines would have a reload capability.

Dr. Ekle: How many submarines with SLCMs could you have by 1982?

Admiral Holloway: We could have 70, all SSNs.

President Ford: Are those already counted?

Admiral Holloway: No, they are attack subs.

Secretary Clements: We could change the mission of the SSN 688s. We have only thought of having 2 to 3 on board for strategic capability. We didn't want to degrade their original mission.

Admiral Holloway: We have been talking more in terms of options and flexibility for the future. The planner who looks to the future thinks in terms of having 24 spaces in an attack sub. He might use 4-8 of those for SLCMs, and 20-16 for torpedoes. Then in his normal day-to-day operations, he would have a strategic reserve. It is important to understand that the planner is not looking at intentions, but at capability.



President Ford: How many of our submarines count in the 2400 total and the 1320 subceiling?

Admiral Holloway: Forty-one SSBNs -- Polaris and Poseidon. Trident will add to that total. We now have approved 10 Trident boats.

President Ford: As the Trident comes in, will you be subtracting from the 41 Polaris and Poseidon boats?

Admiral Holloway: We will not subtract on a one-for-one basis.

Ambassador Johnson: The missiles count but not the boats.

Admiral Holloway: We will have a shortage of launchers. We will have to accelerate the Trident or extend the life of the current launchers.

Dr. Ikle: There will be more of a constraint on MIRV counting from bombers with ALCMs than with the new Trident and Poseidon.

President Ford: What is anybody's reaction to having 250 Backfire in a five-year agreement, matching them with surface ships with cruise missiles of 2400 to 2500 km range? This is assuming the ships are reconfigured or planned and constructed.

Secretary Clements: We could add a class of ships, the FFG, which we use to call the Patrol Frigate. We will have a large number of them in production in three shipyards. We could do something perhaps with them.

However, I have been thinking that this is a surprise. This never surfaced in the Verification Panel. I frankly don't agree with it. It is a very poor trade. The difference in megatonage is just one gauge. All other gauges are also in the negative. In addition, the Backfire as a system is much more flexible, whereas ships are constrained by their environment. Backfire is enormously more flexible than any ship mode.

Vice President Rockefeller: And the Backfire can be refueled, too.

Secretary Clements: Right. I don't know what kind of rationale we would use to explain the trade. The ten to one relationship is exactly reversed of what it should be. It should be 250 ships and 25 Backfires. But I defer, Mr. President, to your position.

What worries me the most is Brezhnev's statement about the radius of the Backfire. How can he make that kind of statement about the Backfire? The range is one-half of what we say it is. How can you trade with him seriously when he gives us such false premise? There is no sense for that. I don't know what we are trading.



In figuring this, it says that you count the platforms in the MIRV limit -- the ships under the 1320 ceiling. Therefore, considering everything you have said, doesn't that change the analysis?

Dr. Ikle: It puts additional pressure on MIRVs.

President Ford: For every ship, a missile comes out.

Director Colby: The 1320 subceiling doesn't hurt them for a long time.

President Ford: But it affects us. If you add all this, and take it out of the 1320, it changes the charts. You are saying the ships are not as powerful as thought.

Dr. Ikle: The ships give some pressure on the MIRVed missiles; you might have to give up some Minuteman III.

President Ford: If you go to the limit for Option IV, you must subtract something also.

Dr. Ikle: The penalty is that you have fewer than you can MIRV, but you are not necessarily affecting the megatonnage.

Brent Scowcroft: You may or may not be.

Admiral Holloway: There are an infinite number of variations.

President Ford: The paper doesn't present all the options accurately.

Director Colby: The surface ships are below other systems in megatonnage.

Brent Scowcroft: We are setting aside the Backfire and surface SLCMs not so much for an equal trade, but we are setting aside the gray area systems.

We don't always have comparability in SALT. You can't compare a fully loaded B-52 with an SSN-6. There is no comparison, but both systems count. We have no comparability now.

We all agreed on Modified 4 and Variant 4. This would have given us 235 Backfire by 1985 which would not count -- 115 free and 120 by 1977.



It seems to me that the five-year program gives us a chance to stop the Backfire where it was. In 1982 we will be ready for maximum deployment of cruise missiles. This is the advantage of a five-year agreement versus straight Option III.

Dr. Ikle: I am troubled by the relationship of 25 ships to 250 Backfire. Instead we could propose "gray areas." We could say they are not strategic forces, and there is some equitability in relating platforms to Backfires. Also, there is an asymmetry resulting from the verification problem.

Brent Scowcroft: They will have no cruise missiles by 1982.

Dr. Ikle: But they could by 1985.

Vice President Rockefeller: They can do the same thing with cruise missiles that we can.

Brent Scowcroft: But they can't have cruise missiles on surface ships.

Vice President Rockefeller: But they can have some cruise missiles.

President Ford: No, not on surface ships or on the Backfire.

Dr. Ikle: There will be uncertainty regarding their range. The Soviets might say their missiles are "600 km" in range, but they could be as much as 1500 km, simply from using a high profile versus a low profile. Therefore, there is uncertainty.

The same is true with submarines. For us it would be 600 km, but theirs would be uncertain. They could be about 1200-1500 km, which would put them in range of the U.S. from their submarines. Their surface ships might have somewhat longer range SLCMs maybe.

Brent Scowcroft: I don't see what follows from that.

Director Colby: On verification, we might not be able to obtain precise evidence of the kind that you could use in the world court, but our total intelligence collection would let us know if they were undertaking a massive effort to cheat. We could pick that up.

Dr. Ikle: You mean massive numbers? Or the range of ALCMs on Backfire?

Director Colby: We could detect massive strategic deployments.

President Ford: They cannot have ALCM on Backfire.

Dr. Ikle: Yes, they can have Backfire up to 600 km. There would be a constant uncertainty; this would be a corrosive irritant.

Admiral Holloway: The fundamental problem is the question of 250 Backfire versus 25 surface ships with SLCMs. This is not an equitable solution. We need special programs in the Navy to modify ships within this time frame. The 25 ships, if we attempt to make comparisons in megatonnage, we might have 50 megatons on a ship versus 30 in our ship force versus 3500 megatons in the Backfire force. In terms of warheads our ships would have 200 warheads and their Backfire force would have 1,000 warheads.

People would say that we are accelerating our strategic weapons program, not limiting them, and that we would end up with less than the Soviets.

In addition, at the end of the five year period, we would be stuck with ships that don't fit into our overall plans -- ships with a degraded general purpose capability.

President Ford: Well, why did DOD propose Option IV?

Admiral Holloway: We in the Navy didn't think much about SLCMs on surface ships since they are not that good.

President Ford: Well, you can't have it both ways. DOD proposed modified Option IV. You have undercut the validity of IV.

Admiral Holloway: We hope that by putting surface SLCMs on the MIRV limit, it would help kill SLCMs on surface ships.

President Ford: Okay. But then you are letting Backfire go free without any offset. You are undercutting DOD's proposal on Option IV modified. All I am saying is that I have been acting on the basis that DOD supported modified Option IV. Your argument raises questions about Option IV.

Dr. Ikle: There is also a question on Option III. If the Soviets do not count 150 Bison variants in the total in Geneva, both the Backfire and the Bison variants would be outside the total.

President Ford: Let's talk about the suggestions on land-based cruise missiles. Option III and Option IV modified proposed banning them over 2500 km. Henry discussed this with them.



Ambassador Johnson: The Soviets now propose to ban them over 600 km. This is a new position.

Secretary Clements: The Soviet proposal to ban them over 600 km is new to us. It destroys part of what safety valve on technology we have. Our proposal on land-based cruise missiles left us a window on technology, but now the Soviets have jerked the rug out from under us.

Vice President Rockefeller: When we talk about land-based cruise missiles I would like to know why the Soviets are so anxious to limit our use of them.

Brent Scowcroft: They are worried about Europe. The 600 km range would prevent us in Europe from hitting the Soviets.

Ambassador Johnson: And the Soviets are worried about the Germans.

Vice President Rockefeller: They know the Backfire -- they have them. However, we only have a beginning on cruise missiles. If we limit our new weapons, we may be hobbling ourselves.

Brent Scowcroft: This is one advantage of the five-year agreement. In the interim if we find some new use, we can always make adjustments.

Vice President Rockefeller: What happened to the 5500 km range?

Ambassador Johnson: This is a new position. We want to ban them over 2500 km.

President Ford: One proposal was to limit the range to 600 km, which we have not accepted. Another proposal is to limit range to 2500 km, which would protect our ability to deploy cruise missiles in Western Europe. Or we could stick with a 5500 km range, which is approximately 3,000 miles.

Ambassador Johnson: The 5500 km range definition for strategic systems arises from the Interim Agreement. It is the range from the northeast United States to the northwest part of the Soviet Union.

President Ford: What observations are there on the three options? We don't seem to want the 600 km limit, so it boils down to 5500 km versus 2500 km.



Dr. Ikle: There is a slight advantage to the 2500 km figure with respect to verification.

Brent Scowcroft: It is not a slight advantage. Once they test them at that range they can put them on any vehicle.

Dr. Ikle: But verification is easier.

Vice President Rockefeller: Are we about five years ahead of the Soviets in cruise missiles?

Secretary Clements: More like eight to ten years ahead.

Vice President Rockefeller: What about verification problems?

President Ford: Bill (Colby), can you verify the beginning of a test program?

Director Colby: We may have a little trouble. We have a systems problem. We may lose our ability to detect cruise missile tests by the early 1980s unless we get new systems.

If they test at a legitimate range, they still can make longer ranges very easily.

President Ford: Do we have a land-based cruise missile program?

Secretary Clements: No.

Admiral Holloway: We in the Navy are keeping the Army and Air Force informed about our cruise missile program, but there is no land-based cruise missile program yet.

President Ford: Well, if you would go to such a program, it would be 5500 km, not 2500 km except for European deployment.

Secretary Clements: Why 5500 km?

President Ford: For our own purposes; developing a 2500 km missile is no good.

Secretary Clements: We can give them to our conventional forces in Europe.



President Ford: That is what I said. If we are talking about strategic missiles, we are talking about 5500 km.

Dr. Ikle: That brings us to the Backfire. The Russians argue that it has a theater mission.

President Ford: Well, how do we stand on 2500 km versus 5500 km?

Ambassador Johnson: I prefer 2500 km. It protects us for the five-year period. And it gives us a small verification gain.

Vice President Rockefeller: But they will have nothing in five years.

Ambassador Johnson: The principle of the single limit for cruise missiles is good. But if they are to be truly intercontinental, they would need a much greater range than 5500 km.

President Ford: If we went to 2500 km, how much of a technological jump would there be to get a true intercontinental missile?

Admiral Holloway: For land-based missiles, not much of a problem. The greatest demand is on the sea-based missiles because of the 21-inch tube constraint. There is only a problem of scale after that. With the TERCOM guidance system, accuracy is good regardless of the range.

President Ford: If we go with the 2500 km technology for the five-year period, could we at the end of five years extend the range easily?

Admiral Holloway: Yes..

President Ford: Therefore, 2500 km makes sense. And there is a verification gain.

Secretary Clements: That's okay. This is not a big issue with us.

President Ford: Are there any other comments?

Dr. Ikle: The five-year Option III probably would give us leverage for the next five years to keep the number of Backfire low. It would also preserve the concessions on ALCMs as MIRVs and limit the number of launchers per platform to less than 15.



Secretary Clements: The 10 to 1 ratio makes no sense. It is an uneven trade. It is next to impossible to defend.

Brent Scowcroft: One option would be modified IV. Otherwise, we may have no agreement at all. Therefore, they would have 375 Backfires by 1982, and we would have at least six surface ships.

Director Colby: The megatonnage comparison is one we gave up consciously. We consciously chose small weapons.

President Ford: We have the capability to increase the megatonnage if we want.

Admiral Holloway: We can think about Henry's "gray area" and try to find an offset for Backfire. Possibly we can offset Backfire with all SLCM platforms -- submarine or surface ship, or the freedom to mix. We want to find a rationale that relates SLCM platforms and Backfire.

President Ford: That's the right thing to do, bearing in mind the problem of how many surface ships we would have ready. If an alternate platform such as submarines makes sense, then it might be a good thing to do. I had the impression that we could get 25 ships, but you are telling me this is difficult to do unless we use submarines. Look at this as quickly as you can.

Vice President Rockefeller: If the U. S. attacked the Soviets, we could only kill 27 percent of their missiles. What could they do against us? Higher?

Director Colby: I have some figures here.

Secretary Clements: Our fundamental problem is the premise of the range of the Backfire.

Vice President Rockefeller: If we eliminate cruise missiles as potential intercontinental missiles, even if it is only a five-year agreement, it may turn out to be a disadvantage to us. I think the longer the range we can get the better for us.

President Ford: Except technically it is not difficult to add to the range if we develop a 2500 km technology.



Director Colby: In any event, we were projected to continue to have our retaliatory capability in the years ahead. We will have enough surviving warheads. Deterrence will still work.

President Ford: How much of total deterrence is represented by the Backfire and surface ship-SLCMs?

Dr. Ikle: Surface ships are vulnerable.

President Ford: With respect to their bombers, we have had the option of augmenting our air defenses. But there was a decision by us not to do so. We spent millions of dollars on BOMARC and then we phased it out.

Brent Scowcroft: I would like to make one comment. We have an ongoing negotiation and we can't sit on this.

Vice President Rockefeller: We could take the front half -- 2500 km versus 5500 km.

President Ford: This is no problem.

Dr. Ikle: I believe we should consider the throw weight limit on the SS-18 and 19. The end result is very important. We have made some agreements.

Brent Scowcroft: We have not agreed to anything.

Secretary Clements: What do we do about their position on Backfire radius? Accept it? We must face up to this!

Brent Scowcroft: We can't accept it.

Secretary Clements: Then, what is our strategy?

President Ford: If we have separate agreement on the gray areas, we can offset a gray area system with a gray area system.

Ambassador Johnson: What should we do about it?

Secretary Clements: This is the real issue. If what he says is true about the Backfire radius, there is no issue.

President Ford: We don't accept their range figure. We will accept it as a gray area. We can use something else to offset it.



Director Colby: The 2500 km figure is startling.

Dr. Ikle: There is disagreement on the Backfire range. How do we settle the cruise missile range?

Vice President Rockefeller: We are limiting ourselves if we limit cruise missiles.

President Ford: Jim (Admiral Holloway), will you get that study in. If we have no agreement, we have nothing. They will be able to do what they want to do with Backfire. The Backfire is in production but the cruise missiles are not.

