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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Mr. Scowcroft

I am becoming increasingly
concerned.

A "national policy decision",
or at least, a NSC discussion
seems highly desirable.

ITEM WITHDRAWAL SHEET
WITHDRAWAL ID 00999

Collection/Series/Folder ID No. : 004700174
Reason for Withdrawal : NS, National security restriction
Type of Material : MEM, Memo(s)
Creator's Name : Brent Scowcroft
Receiver's Name : President
Description : Intelligence matters
Creation Date : 07/24/1976
Volume (pages) : 2
Date Withdrawn : 05/25/1988

*Sanitized version in
open file 5/12/10*

MEMORANDUM
DECLASSIFIED w/ portions exempted

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AUTHORITY QDC NLF-CODEWORD-50-28-8-1 THE WHITE HOUSE

BY WJA NARA, DATE 5/12/10 ^{1/10/06} WASHINGTON

INFORMATION
July 24, 1976

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Handwritten initials

NRO REVIEWED 21-Dec-2004: SANITIZED FOR RELEASE IN PART

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *BS*
SUBJECT: U. S. Anti-Satellite Capability

In approving the NSDM on protecting U. S. satellites, you requested further comments on the status and prospects for a U. S. anti-satellite capability.

The U. S. has not had an operational anti-satellite capability for several years and, under current plans, will not for some time in the future. The nuclear anti-satellite system we maintained on Johnson Island in the Pacific was phased out in 1974. Some limited R&D has been pursued on a non-nuclear anti-satellite interceptor; however, this effort has received little emphasis in the past. DOD now plans some increase in funding for this area, leading to an experimental test in the early 1980s and a possible limited operational capability in the mid-1980s.

The NSC technical consultants panel which had earlier submitted an interim report on satellite survivability issues has now provided a second Interim Report (Tab A) summarizing their preliminary findings with respect to a U. S. anti-satellite capability.

The Panel concluded that space assets are now playing a key role in determining the effectiveness and capabilities of important elements of the military forces of both the U. S. and the Soviets. The Panel believes that, as a matter of national policy, the U. S. should not allow the Soviets an exclusive sanctuary in space. The U. S. should acquire the option of selectively neutralizing militarily important Soviet space capabilities. The need for such a U. S. anti-satellite capability is related to its military value and is not directly related to the Soviet anti-satellite program. The Panel identified several technical options for achieving such a capability, including electronic attack as well as physical attack. These preliminary conclusions are discussed in more detail in the Interim Report at Tab A.

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At present the U. S. anti-satellite program is not receiving emphasis because, in part, there is no national policy to develop an anti-satellite capability. The lack of a policy decision has been related to:

- Our perception (now seen as incorrect) that the Soviets were not aggressively pursuing an anti-satellite system;
- a concern that preparation for satellite interception would be contrary to the spirit if not the letter of the SALT protection of "national technical means," and;
- a view that it would not be in our interest to stimulate satellite interception since we are more dependent on intelligence from space sources and would have more to lose.

The fact of the Soviet intercept tests alters these perceptions and the strategic and political policies connected with the possible development and deployment of a U. S. anti-satellite capability need to be reexamined.

The NSC consultants panel is accelerating its work and will have more specific recommendations in its Final Report, which I hope to have by September. I will forward specific recommendations for action at that time.

Attachment:

Tab A -- NSC Space Panel Interim Report
(Ltr dtd 7/16/76 fm Buchsbaum)

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ITEM WITHDRAWAL SHEET
WITHDRAWAL ID 01000

Collection/Series/Folder ID No. : 004700174
Reason for Withdrawal : NS,National security restriction
Type of Material : REP,Report(s)
Creator's Name : Solomon J. Buchsbaum
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*open in part
RAC Review*

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

July 16, 1976

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Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, USAF(Ret.)
Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs
The White House
Washington, D. C.

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AUTHORITY RDC NLF-60-28-8-1
BY ll NARA, DATE 5/12/10 1/10/06

Dear General Scowcroft:

In our first Interim Report on the activities of the NSC Space Panel, dated April 16, 1976, we dealt primarily with the issue of vulnerability of U.S. satellites and we urged that attention be focused on measures to enhance the survivability of critical U.S. space assets. At that time we commented only briefly on U.S. anti-satellite capabilities. Recently the Panel has been addressing the issue of a U.S. anti-satellite capability in some detail. This second Interim Report summarizes our preliminary views on the matter.

Both the U.S. and the Soviets have become increasingly dependent on space for important military capabilities, having integrated space systems into military force operations. We believe this trend will continue. The U.S. is largely dependent on satellites for intelligence collection, warning, communications, and to a lesser degree for SSBN navigation and other functions. With the advent of the [25x1] and the [25x1] [25x1] we will further increase our dependence on space systems for real-time surveillance.

Soviet dependence on space systems, although not symmetric, also is extensive and growing. In particular, the Soviet long-range cruise missile threat to the U.S. surface Navy relies on the use of Soviet ELINT and radar ocean surveillance satellites for over-the-horizon location and targeting of U.S. aircraft carriers and other major combatants. The Soviets also depend on space systems, but to a lesser degree, for SSBN navigation, communications, and intelligence collection.



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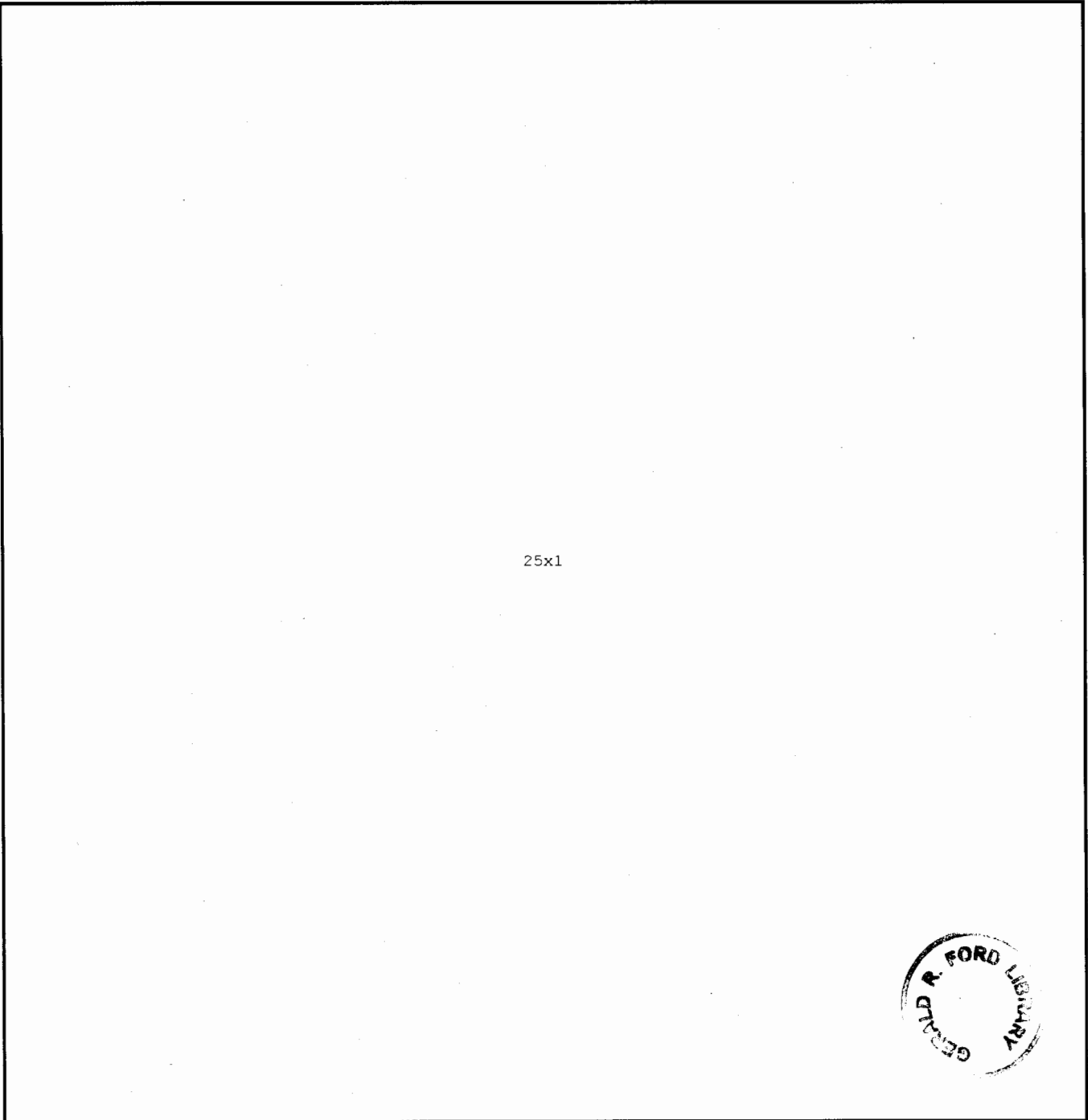
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With space assets now playing a key role in determining the effectiveness and capabilities of important elements of military forces of both sides, satellites will become important military targets. The resurgence of Soviet anti-satellite activity indicates that they are acquiring means to negate some U.S. space capabilities. The U.S. must consider that the Soviets could use this capability during a crisis or conflict. Denying ourselves an anti-satellite capability is tantamount to deciding to allow the Soviets an exclusive sanctuary in space for critical satellites highly important to their military forces.



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The U.S. does not currently have any systems that are designed to jam or electronically attack enemy satellites, but the technology is generally well understood, and an improvised ground-based capability using adaptations of existing equipment could be developed in a few years.

Physical destruction of a Soviet satellite by a non-nuclear interceptor provides a higher confidence kill than electronic jamming and is also effective against some classes of satellites which are less vulnerable electronically, such as photo reconnaissance satellites. However, such a capability is more visible and may have a higher crisis threshold for use.

The technology for a non-nuclear interceptor has received little emphasis in the last few years. The funding level has been [25x1] per year. The Department of Defense now forecasts increased anti-satellite expenditures over the next few years--the current five-year plan calls for cumulative expenditures totalling [25x1] related to interceptor technology. This program, if pursued at its planned level and priority, would lead to an anti-satellite prototype test in space in the early 1980's, and, with additional funding could lead to a limited operational anti-satellite capability by the mid 1980's. The pace of the program could be accelerated, but this would require a national policy decision.

In the long-term, high energy lasers may be available for use as anti-satellite weapons; however, this technology is still immature and should not be expected to provide an operational capability before the late 1980's or early 1990's.

I sincerely hope the preliminary findings of this second Interim Report will prove useful to you in your consideration of this vital area. The Panel is continuing its consideration of these and other technical issues related to the options for a U.S. anti-satellite capability, including considerations of projected costs. We will provide more details on these issues in our final report, and will make specific recommendations. In the meantime, the panel members stand ready to provide any assistance you may desire.

Sincerely,

Solomon Buchsbaum by
ALS

Solomon J. Buchsbaum
Chairman, NSC Ad Hoc Panel on
Technological Evolution and
Vulnerability of Space Systems

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