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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING
ON SALT OPTIONS

Thursday, January 8, 1976

4:00 p.m. (90 minutes)

The Cabinet Room

From: Brent Scowcroft



I. PURPOSE

To review the SALT Verification Panel analysis of possible options for resolving the cruise missile and Backfire issues.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS, AND PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

A. Background: The Verification Panel has been continuing its assessment of alternative approaches for resolving the major remaining issues in SALT TWO -- cruise missiles and Backfire. We now have four options for consideration. Two of these, deferral and the option that counts Backfire in the 2400 aggregate, were discussed at the last NSC meeting. The other two are new options which are variants of/other three options from the last meeting. Each of these options (described below) will be presented to you and discussed at the meeting with the objective of assisting you in arriving at a decision on a package for presentation to the Soviet Union.

1. Option I (Deferral): This approach would defer the cruise missile and Backfire issues to a later negotiation (either SALT III or a separate negotiation on these two issues alone). This would set aside the most controversial of the unresolved SALT issues and codify the terms agreed at Vladivostok (equal aggregates, MIRVed launcher limits, no forward-based system limits, etc.). To insure that the Backfire and cruise missile programs are not accelerated, we might include interim constraints on these systems.

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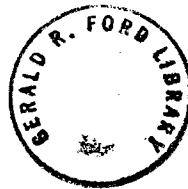
One problem with this approach is that the Soviets may not be willing to include concessions on MIRV verification and ICBM throw weight ceilings in such an agreement. There is also some question whether Congress would support the cruise missile program while cruise missile limits are being negotiated. This option could also be considered as an ultimate fallback position in the negotiations.

2. Option IV (Count Backfire in the Aggregate): This approach would count Backfire in the 2400 ceiling, but in return for extensive cruise missile limits. In effect, the only strategic cruise missiles permitted (over 600 km in range) would be on heavy bombers and surface ships. In addition, the number of heavy bombers equipped with cruise missiles up to 2500 km would count against the MIRV ceiling of 1320.

This imposes severe restraint on the Soviets, causing them to dismantle over 300 ICBMs and SLBMs to deploy the Backfire. On the other hand, we give up submarine launched cruise missiles and would have to replace about 250-300 MIRVed missiles to deploy air launched cruise missiles (ALCM) on our heavy bombers.

3. Option III (Ceiling on Backfire Plus Collateral Constraints): This approach would not count Backfire in the aggregate but would impose a separate limit of 300 to 400 Backfire along with comprehensive collateral constraints to inhibit Backfire's capability for two-way missions against the U.S. These constraints could include a ban on Backfire tankers, a ban on long-range ASMs on Backfire, limits on training and basing, and a requirement that the Soviets phase out older medium bombers as Backfire is deployed. In return, we would include heavy bombers equipped with ALCMs in the MIRV limit, ban long-range SLCMs on submarines, and limit surface ships with long-range SLCMs to 50 or 75 platforms.

The surface-ship SLCMs would provide a balance to the Backfire force since both of these are theater systems with marginal strategic capability.



4. Option II (Collateral Constraints on Backfire; Relaxed Cruise Missile Limits): If the Soviets are unwilling to accept any numerical constraints on Backfire, an intermediate option short of deferral would be to have collateral constraints on Backfire along with less restrictive cruise missile limits compared to Options III and IV. For example, Option II would maintain the collateral constraints which inhibit the two-way capability of Backfire, but would not include heavy bombers with ALCMs in the MIRV total or limit the number of surface ships carrying SLCMs. However, this option would limit the number of heavy bombers with ALCMs to 300, a substantial program.

5. Option to Ban Heavy ICBMs: The Defense Department has advanced a suggestion (called Option G) that would propose a quid pro quo for allowing Backfire to go free; it applies the same limits on cruise missiles as Option IV, but calls for agreement to freeze Soviet deployment of new heavy ICBMs (SS-18s) at the current level 30-75 and a commitment to ban them in the next SALT negotiations. The idea behind this option is that the Soviets could have 300-400 Backfire, or about 3 million pounds of bomber payload if they give up roughly the same amount in new ICBM throw weight, and agree to the kind of reductions in heavy missiles that would make our missile forces much more equal in throw weight at the end of SALT III.

B. Participants: (List at Tab A)

C. Press Arrangements: The meeting, but not the subject, will be announced. There will be a White House photographer.

III. TALKING POINTS

1. I understand that the Verification Panel has been continuing their analysis of possible options for resolving the cruise missile and Backfire issues.

2. Before we start, I want to emphasize that I consider a good SALT agreement to be strongly in the U.S. interest, and that we have to consider not only the Backfire and cruise missiles, but the overall value of the agreement, and the consequences of no agreement.



3. We have no deadline, but in this period before the Soviet Party Congress we may have some bargaining leverage.
4. Let's start with a rundown by Bill Colby of any new developments we should be aware of. Bill, go ahead.

(Following Colby Presentation)

5. Henry, as Chairman of the Verification Panel, why don't you describe to us the options the Panel has developed.

(Following Kissinger presentation)

6. (To Secretary Rumsfeld) Don, would you start the discussion by giving us DOD's view on the options?

(Following the discussion)

7. This meeting has been very useful. I want to spend a few days considering the various possibilities. We may want to give Brezhnev something before Henry goes.
8. I reiterate that I want everyone to continue to devote their energies and to give their full support to the effort to produce a SALT treaty.

Attachment

Tab A -- List of Participants



TALKING POINTS

NSC Meeting
January 8, 1976

-- As agreed at the last NSC meeting, the Verification Panel has reexamined possible options for resolving the cruise missile and Backfire issues.

-- We have developed two new variants, along with the option that would defer Backfire and cruise missiles, and the option that counts all Backfire in the 2400 aggregate.

Option IV - Count Backfire

-- As we discussed at the last meeting, Option IV would clearly be an acceptable outcome for the US since it would count Backfire in the 2400 aggregate, forcing significant Soviet reductions.

-- In my judgment, this option will be unacceptable to the Soviets, primarily because the Backfire has become a matter of principle at the Politburo level, and they will never accept counting it as a heavy bomber in the 2400 aggregate.

-- We might still propose this option as an opener in order to stimulate a counterproposal, but then it is likely we will provoke a rejection, rather than something we might work with.

-- If there is to be any compromise on the Backfire issue, it will have to be initiated by us and then sold to the Politburo by Brezhnev.

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MR 98-40, #43, State Lett 9/25/98
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Option I

-- At the last meeting we also discussed setting aside the Backfire and cruise missile issues to a later negotiation and attempting to codify the provisions agreed at Vladivostok, plus the MIRV verification counting rule and the throw weight ceiling on light (SS-19) and heavy (SS-18) missiles. There are several problems with this approach:

- First, the Soviets linked their concession on MIRV verification to resolution of the cruise missile problems.

• Thus, they may withdraw this concession if cruise missiles are not limited at all.

• The same may be true for our proposal to put a ceiling on light and heavy missiles.

- Second, this Option is a difficult opening position; if it is rejected there is no alternative; if accepted in principle, it could lead to a negotiation on cruise missile restraints.

- Thirdly, it is debatable whether the Congress would support the cruise missile programs while cruise missile limits are being negotiated; we might provoke an attack on cruise missiles as an obstacle to negotiation -- or generate Congressional resolutions to ban flight testing and deployment in the interim.

• However, it may be an ultimate fall-back if all else fails.

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Option III

-- Options II and III are mixed packages which contain substantive cruise missile limits and some limits on Backfire but short of counting it in the aggregate.

-- Option III would place an upper limit on the number of Backfire -- 300 or maybe 400 -- with the objective of putting some ceiling on the Backfire deployment level.

-- In addition, we could try for some collateral constraints to inhibit Backfire's capability for two way missions against the US.

• These could include a ban on Backfire tankers, a ban on long-range ASMs on Backfire, limits on training and basing, and perhaps a requirement that the Soviets phase out older medium bombers as Backfire is deployed.

-- In return we would make some concessions: first we would forego long-range SLCMs on submarines over 600 km but retain the right to deploy SLCMs on surface ships.

One approach we might take would be to balance the surface ship SLCMs for Backfire, where we would be permitted 50 or 75 surface ships with say 10 SLCMs, and they would be permitted 300-400 Backfire.

-- Since both Backfire and SLCMs on surface ships are in the grey area of theater systems with some marginal strategic capability, we might put these systems in a separate protocol to the main agreement with provision for review in 1981 or 1982.

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-- The second concession would be to count heavy bombers equipped with long-range ALCMs in the 1320 MIRV limit.

- This is a significant move from our September proposal, and we will pay a real price in MIRVed missiles in the early 1980s, and the Soviets would forego a maximum deployment of Backfire through 1985. (Intelligence projects 550 total produced by then.)

- On the other hand, our cruise missile programs would be sanctioned in an agreement, and should command Congressional support. This is an advantage compared to a pure deferral.

Option II

-- The next option is really a mid-point between deferral and Option III. If the Soviets resist numerical limits on Backfire we could fall back to something like Option II, before we went to the extreme case of deferral.

-- In Option II we would withdraw the concession of including heavy bombers with long-range ALCMs in the MIRV limit, and withdraw from limiting the number of surface ship SLCM platforms.

-- However, it would include a limit of 300 on heavy bombers with long-range ALCMs as we proposed in September, which would have little or no impact on our ALCM program.

-- There was general agreement in the Verification Panel that Option III would be preferable to Option II as an opening position.



Reductions

--, Mr. President, you might also note that under any of these options we could seek a reduction of the aggregate to 2300, for example, by 1980.

• We all agree that this would be desirable for political purposes, particularly if Backfire is not counted; there's some question whether the Soviets will accept this.

Option "G"

A new approach suggested by the Defense Department has not been discussed in detail and is not on the charts.

-- This new approach is a variation of Options III and IV in which, in effect, we would agree to let Backfire go with only an upper limit. We would make the same offer on cruise missiles as on Option IV.

-- But we would propose a further Soviet price -- namely, that the Soviets would freeze their deployment of new heavy missiles (the SS-18) at the present level of about 30.

-- In addition we would both agree on a pledge to reduce heavy throw weight missiles in SALT III.

-- The idea of this Option is that if the Soviets have 300-400 Backfire outside the numerical limit, they should compensate the US by holding off on vast increases in missile throw weight and the MIRVing of their heaviest missiles. Halting SS-18 deployments has been rejected on several occasions, and it is difficult to see what the Soviet incentive

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would be; in order to deploy Backfire, which they claim is entirely legitimate, they would give up a major missile modernization program.

Political Considerations

-- We have also done some work to look at how the possible outcomes would be argued politically.

-- Option IV would be easy to support as an outcome.

-- We could defend Option III on the grounds that Backfire is restrained by an upper limit, and that we have the capability to counter it with cruise missiles on bombers and surface ships, even FBS.

• Furthermore, with the collateral constraints, in particular, the ban on tankers and the ban on ASMs on Backfire, the Backfire would be restricted to one-way missions against the US.

-- We could also argue that the Soviet rights to Backfire have been balanced by our rights to deploy surface-ship SLCMs -- another gray area system.

-- These arguments would also be presented in the context of the limits agreed at Vladivostok which will require the Soviets to dismantle nearly 200 systems as well as the Soviet agreement on MIRVs which will probably require their counting 120 more MIRVed missiles than they actually have.

