MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense
Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, January 14, 1976
9:35 - 10:45 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

Kissinger: I think we have an urgent decision to make. I don't see how I can go, in the light of the DOD and ACDA memos, which will have to go to Jackson. The objection will be that we rushed to an agreement in the face of agency objections.

I just don't understand Option I. Either an agreement collapses if there is not a subsequent Backfire deal, or you must face the possibility of a treaty which leaves them running free permanently.

But my fundamental problem is that I can't go under these conditions.

Rumsfeld: I didn't know until the meeting what the proposal was and that it would be discussed. You said you had this proposal and it was okay with Henry. It was clear I was out of the loop.

I went back and had a good session with the troops. Brown is staying wired in with the Chiefs.

Now for my memo. The first page just repeats the proposal. The first proposal is for a fixed number instead of limiting them to whatever is produced by a certain date. We think there is no problem with SLCM's as MIRV'd, but we haven't staffed it out.
On the nuclear-armed thing, the Chiefs back away some.

There is no problem with the modified IV. This is just a different way to allow some Backfire, by not counting 115 Bison/Bear.

Kissinger: This issue has really never been discussed at the Brezhnev level. He won't even know it's a problem.

The President: This is the first time I have heard of it.

Rumsfeld: The paper recommends the Modified or the Variant IV. Then as a fallback, I personally would recommend combining the Modified and the Variant, thus giving them about 200-250 Backfire. Then I would think Option I is the most defensible, with an agreement on cruise missile and Backfire by a certain date.

Kissinger: But what if you don't get a Backfire agreement by that date? Either it cancels the whole SALT agreement or the Vladivostok part remains and the Backfire remains free.

The President: The surface ship section of Option III is better than Option IV Modified.

Rumsfeld: The problem is not that; it's breaking the 2400.

[More discussion].

The President: If Henry doesn't go, I think we have no chance for getting a SALT agreement. I would never forgive myself for not trying.

Rumsfeld: I agree.

The President: I believe after Modified Option IV he should try III and then go to I.

Kissinger: I have no problem with that.

[Discussion about using the IV Variant.]

Rumsfeld: What if Henry went and tried IV Modified, and added Variant IV as a sweetener, and if neither of those work, he could cable back; you would call an NSC meeting and we would get to Option III that way and get everyone on board.
Kissinger: That could be done.
Scowcroft: You won't be here, Don.

Kissinger: What if we had an NSC meeting on Monday, when you could tell me to use IV Modified, and then to add Variant IV if necessary. You could say if that is non-negotiable, you are leaning to III, but you wanted me to come back for instructions at that point. Then you could call an NSC meeting with the substitute people because the principals would have been forewarned.

The President: Let's do it that way.

Rumsfeld: I have a couple of points. The C-130 is ready to be billed to the French. I wanted everyone to know, in view of our press statements.

The President, Kissinger, Scowcroft: Go ahead.

Rumsfeld: Also about nuclear modernization in NATO.

Kissinger: I have no problem if it is just studies, and if you go through the NSC before you implement. I think we need to consider it at an NSC meeting.

Scowcroft: I have reservations about Nike Hercules.
I think we have an urgent decision to make. I don't see how I can go in light of the DOD and ACSA view which will have to go to Jackson. The objective will be that we reach to some agreement in case of any objections.

I just don't understand Option F. Either an agreement needs a decision if there is a show drawn back on it or you aren't able to carry it out. I feel that my fundamental job is to work on these matters.

P: Saqer, it would not look like my emerging agencies.

R: I don't know what you're talking about. I think the situation was one that it would be desirable you and your staff to prepare it and K on the same. It was clear I wanted to keep.

I went back to have a good session with the troops. Brian is staying with me in the Chief's office. How is your message? I am prepared to make a proposal. The first proposal is for a final # twice situation is produced by a chart.

We think there is no part of what I need. This is just a draft way to see where you are behind by not knowing 15% from 90.

(Registration of current 10% from 

This seems to have really been discussed at this level. He went down here without it.

This is a pretty good house that 2.
The paper I am going to hand out is Variant III. Then if you think, I probably would recommend
conducting both V and Variant, then giving them
about 700-250 faces. Then I would
think if option I is most defensible, of the 24/24
agreement by a date certain.

But what if you don't get a 24/24 agreement by
that date? Either it comes out whole salt agreement
or a duel pact remains + backfire remains.

P. The finite step function of option I is
better than option III would.

R. The fact is not that, it is breaking a rose
(verbatim)

P. I feel without, I think we should move
for getting salt. I would even forgive
myself for not trying.

R. I agree.

P. I believe without paid option I the
should

K. I know me part of that.

(Discussion about moving to Variant

K. What if current + had LV would, add
Variant IV as a substitute if it raised a
worry, the would cut back. You would kill
NSC, with + we would get it option IV that
way + get everyone around.

K. Could be done.

S. You cannot be here. Did.

K. What if we had an NSC at first, we
then
you could tell me to wipe out LV and them
add Variant 1 if necessary. You could say if that were not you planning to fit but you wanted to come back for inspection
at that point. Then you could call an RSC as a substitute jet because a proven robot
would have been forgotten.

I have a couple of points. The C-130 is only to be backed to the breach. I wanted everyone to
know, in view of our press statements
go ahead.

Also nice, adding the in 4770.

Also no part if it is part finished, if
separate then a RSC before your involvement.
I think we need to consider this very.

I have comments about Note 3 here.