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By WPD NARA Date 7/6/98

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STRATEGIC POLICY ISSUES

This memorandum provides a brief over-view of the strategic situation and then considers the single issue which requires immediate attention: should President Johnson's FY70 budget for strategic forces be amended now and if so, how? More fundamental issues will be addressed in the six month review.

I. The Strategic Situation

This section provides a brief over-view of the strategic situation as background for necessary immediate decisions.

US-Soviet Force Comparisons. The present US force plan calls for the number of ICBMs to remain constant at 1,054, the number of sea based missiles to be held at 656 (41 Polaris submarines), and the number of strategic bombers to decrease to approximately 300 in the 1970s. However, US strategic offensive forces will undergo very substantial qualitative improvements over the next five years, most importantly by MIRVs. With these deployments, the number of independently targetable US strategic missile warheads will increase from the current approximately 1,600 to about 5,800 by the mid-1970s. Similarly, our strategic bomber force will undergo substantial improvements encompassing advanced penetration aids.

The Soviets have continued their ICBM buildup and within two years may have 1,200 of these systems operationally deployed; they could have 1,500 ICBMs and a few hundred mobile ICBMs by the mid-1970s. The Soviets have a substantially smaller sea based force and bomber force than the US, but they have recently initiated a new submarine construction program which could give them a force comparable to our present Polaris fleet by the mid-1970s. They are estimated to be about four years away from initially deploying MIRVs on large ICBMs.

On the defensive side, the US Sentinel ABM designed against China, comprised of some 700 defensive missiles, will be initially operational in late 1972 and fully deployed by 1975. The Soviet ABM program has lagged, with completion of the small Moscow ABM (64 launchers) not to occur until the early 70s. The intelligence community estimates that the Soviets will probably deploy an ABM comparable to Sentinel by the mid-70s. There are no current signs of additional ABM deployments beyond Moscow, and the extensively deployed Tallin system is estimated to be for air defense purposes with no real ABM potential.

Relative Effectiveness. Comparing the numbers and types of US and Soviet strategic systems does not indicate how well the respective forces can perform strategic missions. Effectiveness is generally measured in terms of the ability of the forces to survive an enemy first strike and inflict large fatalities on an adversary's population.

Our currently programmed force can maintain the ability to inflict 40% Soviet fatalities (90 million) throughout the early to mid-1970s against the highest threat estimated by the intelligence community. If it is determined that a greater than expected Soviet offensive and defensive

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threat is emerging, a very unlikely but possible occurrence, the US has many force improvement and addition options which can be implemented soon enough to maintain the ability to deter the Soviets at at least the 25% fatality level.

With estimated probable future deployments, the Soviet Union can maintain its second strike damage potential against the US at 40% US fatality levels throughout the 1970s (80 million). Although the Soviets may have to work harder and spend relatively more money than the US in maintaining their second strike capability, we can be certain that the Soviets can and will take sufficient counteractions to retain the ability to inflict unacceptably high levels of damage against the US regardless of our force procurements.

In general, if one examines the outcome of strategic exchanges between the US and the Soviet Union throughout the 1970s, both will suffer very heavy destruction regardless of who strikes first and independent of detailed differences in force level and characteristics.

Conduct of Nuclear Operations. Despite our efforts to prevent nuclear wars or major crises such events may occur. If we are to secure the most favorable possible outcome we need to be able to control forces effectively during a crisis and to employ nuclear weapons selectively. Our procurement decisions are based mainly on deterrence considerations and most of our nuclear plans assume sudden very large use of nuclear weapons. Issues requiring consideration are: (1) whether we need to pay more attention to issues of control and selective use in procuring forces and (2) whether we need more flexible plans for the use of nuclear weapons.

Political Implications. The US nuclear capability is a major component of our deterrent of large conventional attacks particularly in Europe. Europeans are concerned about US strategic forces and the US-Soviet nuclear balance for this reason and because some of them desire and some fear US-Soviet strategic arms limitation agreements.

The effect on the probability and consequences of nuclear proliferation also needs to be taken into account in designing US strategic forces.

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