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Authority EO 12958
By SWT NARA Date 6/21/00

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

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January 24, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Walter B. Slocombe *WS*

SUBJECT: A Safeguard Site at Washington for FY 71?

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ORIG) NSC	TO) PAR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	SUBJ

The President indicated at the NSC meeting, in response to your suggestion and the comments of others, that he wanted to consider the possibility of substituting a Safeguard site at Washington for the one DOD proposed for the Pacific Northwest.

This memorandum sets forth some of the factors which might be considered in deciding on the wisdom of that substitution.

What is a Washington site?

I have assumed, on the basis of DOD listings of alternatives in earlier documents in the course of the review, that the Washington site would have a Missile Site Radar (MSR), but no Perimeter Acquisition Radar (PAR), and that it would have both Spartans for long range interception and Sprints for terminal defense of the capital itself. DOD illustrative systems assign about 100 missiles, divided between Spartan and Sprint to the Washington site. The Sprint sites would have to be within 15-20 miles of the city; the MSR and the Spartans could be farther away.

Advantages

There is a strong theoretical political and strategic argument that NCA defense may be the most important element of an ABM system:

-- A third country -- or a crazed unit commander -- who wanted to provoke a nuclear exchange between the U.S. and the USSR might believe Washington an ideal target, hoping that, with the head destroyed, the limbs would lash out spasmodically at the other superpower. A defense of the capital would lessen the temptation to make such attacks and reduce the danger, however small, of a "mistaken" retaliation. The kind of system which would be built for Washington could probably effectively deny damage to command facilities against a small attack. The degree of protection afforded, however, is highly dependent on the assumptions about the character of the attack.

-- Although the NCA defense objective was not given high prominence in Congressional testimony, nothing I have been able to turn up in a quick

-- More broadly, by protecting the "brain" of the retaliatory force, it would carry forward the general objective of using active defense of our retaliatory capability.

"We will provide for . . . an area defense designed to protect our . . . command and control authorities."

Third, such a deployment would be fully consistent with the rationale the President advanced in announcing the system last March. Indeed, it would wholly achieve one of his stated specific objectives:

-- Initiation of construction of a Washington site might possibly give us a cheap bargaining counter. Having started, we could offer to trade this is in fact a plausible trade-off is a matter of judgment.

-- Neither the Soviets nor the congressional opposition could legitimately argue that a deployment which would protect the U.S. capital as the Soviet is now protected is "provocative," a charge which might be leveled at deployments intended for area defense alone.

Second, from the SALT point of view, protection of Washington could be defended as a simple equivalent of the system the Soviets have deployed around Moscow:

-- On the other hand, we cannot safely assume that the Soviets share the judgment of some strategic analysts that a major attack should avoid the enemy's capital in the hope of limiting retaliation and "leaving someone to negotiate with." On the contrary, the Soviets might believe that our command and control structures are so cautiously constructed that destruction of the central authority would paralyze our forces. While we believe that our alternative command facilities are so designed that loss of Washington would not prevent effective retaliation, it is possible that in an actual attack, a retaliation launched under alternative procedures would be less well coordinated than one launched by an authority of unquestionable legitimacy. Against a massive Soviet attack on the capital, we could not deny damage, for the Soviets could exhaust the available supply of interceptors. However, we could delay the time when the White House and Pentagon were destroyed, allowing more time for the attack orders to be given or for the President and other senior officials to move to alternate facilities.

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-- As shown in the map at Tab B, the Washington site makes a relatively modest contribution to coverage even after the full seven site "interim" system is complete. (The diagonals show the area protected by the seven site system. The cross-hatched area shows what would not be protected if the Washington site did not exist.) On the other hand, once the New England and Michigan/Ohio sites are in place, the Washington site provides valuable redundant coverage and radar support for protecting the heavily populated Northeastern Corridor.

-- The Washington site will have no PAR of its own. This means that until other PARS, at Michigan/Ohio and New England, are available, its area coverage over the Northeastern Corridor toward New York will be very limited. It might reach Baltimore, but not Philadelphia. (The map at Tab A shows an approximation of the coverage of the lone Washington site. The Grand Forks PAR allows coverage out toward Lake Erie, while the MSR itself can track missiles which pass over Washington toward targets in the southeast.)

Second, a Washington site, though nominally a part of the DOD seven-site "interim" system for limited area defense, gives very little area coverage:

First, there may be political problems with appearing to protect the President and Congress, but delaying an area defense for the population generally. The argument is strategically irrational, but may be politically decisive. On the other hand, it, like other arguments, may be essentially only a debating point.

Disadvantages

Fourth, unlike a site whose only function is as a part of an area defense, e.g., Northwest, the Washington site, when complete will serve an important function in and of itself. Therefore, work can begin on it without the Administration having to take a definite stand on what kind of area defense system it intends to build. "Pure" area sites have the disadvantage that to make sense they require that the Administration commit itself to building more sites beyond those on which work can actually begin in FY 71.

Survey was said which is consistent with it. Moreover, since an NCA defense is directed jointly at Soviet and Chinese attack, building it in public and then starting on an ABM system designed to protect against the Chinese.

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Third, insofar as one is concerned about protecting the NCA against a massive Soviet attack, Washington is a "hard point" just as much as a Minuteman field, and the technical argument against the usefulness of Safeguard components applies. However, the criticism is not so serious as against Minuteman defense:

-- One is also concerned about defending Washington, but not MM, against Chinese, Nth country, and accidental attacks.

-- Taking out the MSR before striking the main target would presumably take some time, as well as absorbing attacking RVs. Unless you are willing to fire Minutemen (through pindown, EMP and debris) on warning, that is no help with Minuteman defense. When defending the President, on the contrary, it is time you are most concerned to win by your defense.

Fourth, the Washington site provides practically no defense of bombers. Neither, for that matter, does the Northwest site acting alone, though the New England one does. From the point of bomber protection, the lack of a PAR at Washington is a disadvantage, just as with area defense, for it delays the time before the system has seaward coverage for more distant ABM sites.

Fifth, the argument that a Washington site is good from the point of view of SALT is not unanswerable:

-- The comparability of a Washington site to the Galosh system at Moscow may be more convincing to U.S. lawyers than to Soviet marshals. We say they are the same because they both protect national capitals. They may argue they are totally different because theirs is finished while ours is just beginning.

-- It could be argued that if we are going to try to persuade the Soviets to accept a dichotomy between ABM aimed at them (destabilizing and negotiable) and ABMs aimed at third countries and accidental attacks (no threat to them and not negotiable), we would do better to concentrate our early deployments on a site without dual purpose, but build instead an area site which can be defended publicly as aimed solely at China.

Finally, if the President is committed to have an area defense permitted the U.S. as part of a SALT agreement, at least unless the Soviets come up with a tremendously attractive counter offer, it may be that we should get started on the area system before an agreement is signed:

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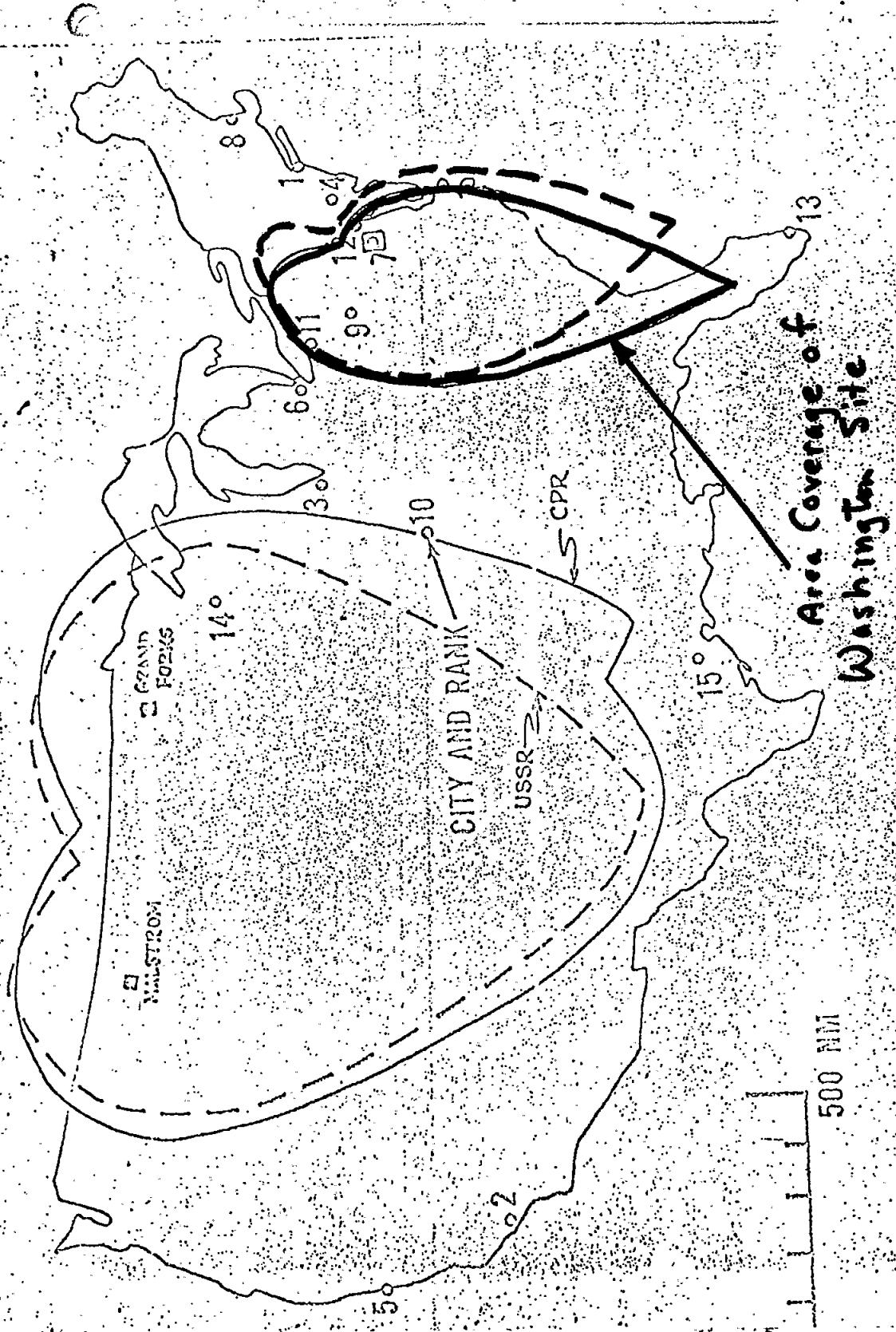
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-- Actually starting construction might be the most effective way of demonstrating commitment to the system.

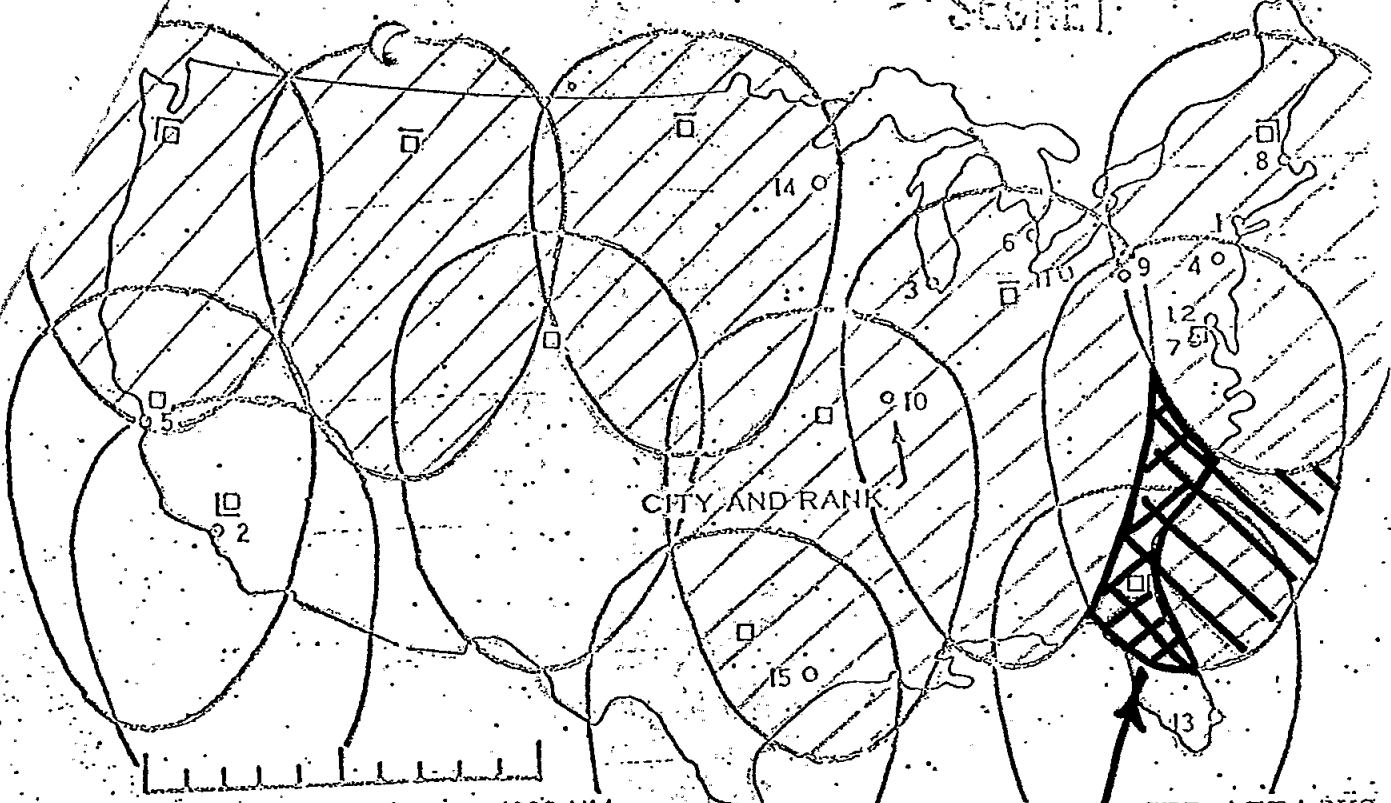
-- However, irrational such a reaction might be strategically, Congress might balk at starting a large area system immediately after an agreement was signed, even if the agreement allowed the system to be built. An initial deployment on a site for area protection only might tend to involve the Congress in the President's commitment to finish the system.

WASHINGTON D. C. (AGAINST LIGHT AND ACCIDENTAL ICBM)

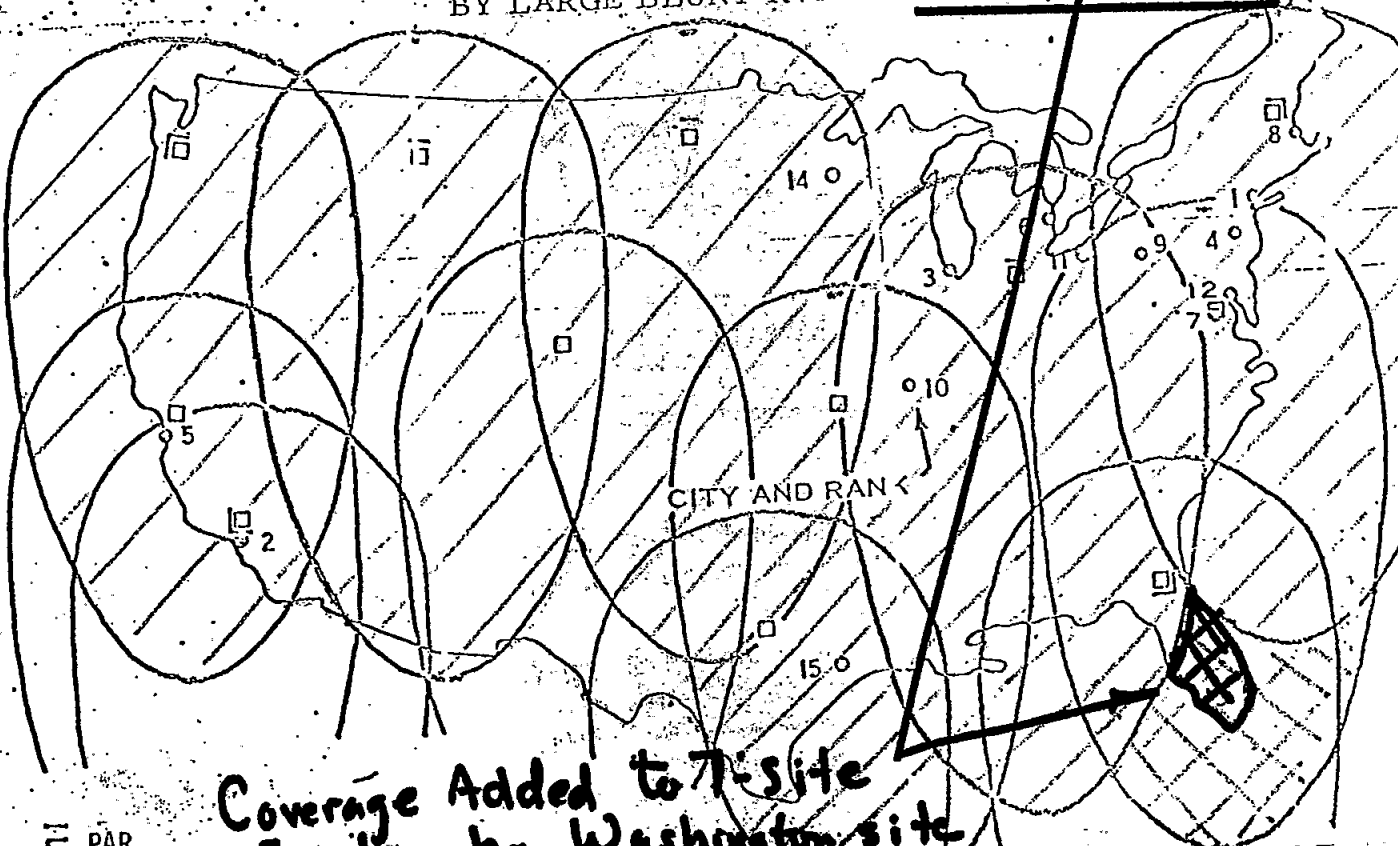


BY LARGE, BLUNT RVs FOR BASIC SPARTAN

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COVERAGE PROVIDED BY TWELVE SITE DEFENSE FOR CPR ATTACKS
BY LARGE BLUNT RVs FOR IMPROVED SPARTAN



Coverage Added to 7-site System by Washington site

- PAR
- MSR, SPARTAN
- 7 PAR
- 12 MSR
- 240 SPARTAN

225 IMPROVED SPARTAN
414 SPRINT

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