The original documents are located in Box 2, folder: "NSC Meeting, 7/21/1976" of the National Security Adviser's NSC Meeting File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE WHITE HOUSE

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Final version

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

ON SALT

Wednesday, July 21, 1976
9:30 a.m. (60 minutes)
The Cabinet Room

From: Brent Scowcroft

I. PURPOSE

To review the status of the SALT negotiations and alternative approaches to take at this stage of the negotiations.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS, AND PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

A. Background: In February we communicated a proposal to the Soviets based on completion of the Vladivostok Agreement plus an interim agreement for the period through January 1979 that would: (1) restrict sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) and land-launched cruise missile (LLCM) testing to 2500 km and deployment to 600 km, and (2) limit the Backfire production level to the current rate. The Vladivostok portion of the agreement (to last through 1985) included counting heavy bombers with 600 - 2500 km ALCMs in the 1320 ceiling and banning ALCMs over 600 km on other aircraft.

The Soviets rejected this proposal in March and expressed a strong preference for returning to the negotiating situation which prevailed in January. Their particular concerns were the continued US insistence that Backfire should be limited and our movement back from our January position where we offered to ban deployment and testing of submarine SLCMs over 600 km.

The Verification Panel has been examining alternative approaches to take at this stage of the negotiation. (The paper prepared for this meeting is at Tab B.) Two approaches will be presented for your consideration:

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1. Maintain our most recent position as put forward in February. Within this approach, we could consider the following modifications which might improve its negotiability:

   -- Include a ban on all cruise missiles above 2500 km in the 1985 Vladivostok Agreement.

   -- Include this ban in the Vladivostok Agreement but drop the interim agreement concept in its entirety.

   -- Extend the period of the interim agreement through October 1980 (i.e., allow three years after the new agreement goes into effect for negotiation of limits on SLCMs, LLCMs, and Backfire).

2. The second approach would provide for:

   -- reductions to 2150, including reduction of about 100 Soviet heavy missiles (SS-9s).

   -- a Soviet statement on their Backfire production plans, and Soviet assurances and collateral constraints to inhibit use of Backfire against the US.

   -- retention of the ALCM and submarine SLCM limitations from January proposal; i.e., heavy bombers with 600-2500 km ALCMs would be counted in the 1320, ALCMs over 600 km would be banned on all other aircraft, and SLCMs over 600 km would be banned on submarines. SLCMs on surface ships would be limited in range.

At Tab B is the Verification Panel paper.

At Tab C is a copy of my earlier memo summarizing the current options.

At Tab D is the February proposal.

At Tab E is Secretary Rumsfeld's memo suggesting a message to Brezhnev.

At Tab F is ACDA Director Ikle's memo suggesting removal of the Interim Agreement portion of the February proposal.

B. Participants: (List at Tab A)

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

III. TALKING POINTS

At the opening of the meeting

1. Before we get into a detailed discussion, I want to re-emphasize my strong interest in conclusion of a new SALT agreement building on the basic provisions which we negotiated at Vladivostok. I consider a sound and defensible SALT agreement to be strongly in the US interest and not simply an issue of partisan politics.

2. We have a responsibility to consider carefully not only the provisions currently being negotiated but the long-term impact of not reaching an agreement.

3. We have no deadline for reaching an agreement. I think it is essential, however, to keep in mind that the Interim Agreement does expire in October. It is my view that we should take a hard look at the current negotiating situation to see if an agreement that is in the US interest can be achieved over the next few months.

4. I understand the Verification Panel has been looking at several approaches which we could take at this stage of the negotiations.

5. Henry, as Chairman of the Verification Panel, could you describe the status of the negotiations and the approaches the Verification Panel has been analyzing.

(Following Kissinger presentation)

6. Don, I'd like to hear your views on these issues.

(Following the discussion)

7. I have found this meeting to be particularly helpful in my consideration of this issue. I want to take the time to carefully consider the possible approaches we could take at this time.

8. I want to emphasize once again my interest in moving ahead in SALT if at all possible, and I want everyone to devote their energies to this effort, and I expect full support and unity of effort on whichever course I feel is in the overall best interests of the United States.

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TALKING POINTS

NSC MEETING

Tuesday, July 20, 1976 - 2:30 am

-- Mr. President, the purpose of this meeting is to review for you the status of the SALT negotiations and to describe two basic approaches which you might adopt as our reply to the Soviets.

-- First, I think it would be helpful to review our efforts over the last nin months.

-- Last September, we introduced the idea of treating sea-based cruise missiles and Backfire as hybrid or "grey" areas: we proposed a common limit of 300 hybrid systems on the two sides -- for the Soviets, Backfires and SLCMs up to 2000 km in range, and for us, FB-111s and SLCMs up to 2000 km. The effect would have been for the Soviets to forego cruise missiles if they wanted a full complement of Backfire.

- That proposal also included a limit of 300 heavy bombers equipped ALCMs up to 2500 km in range.

-- Brezhnev flatly rejected that proposal. He specifically complained about treating Backfire as a "hybrid".

-- In January, we considered four options, ranging from complete deferral of Backfire and cruise missiles, to counting all of them. Our initial proposal prior to my January discussion called for:

- Counting all Backfire produced after October 1977 in the 2400 aggregate.

- Counting heavy bombers with 600-2500 km ALCMs in the 1320 MIRV ceiling.

- Banning submarine SLCMs over 600 km in range.

- Banning land-based cruise missiles and surface ship cruise missiles over 2500 km.

- Counting each surface ship armed with 600-2500 km SLCMs in the 1320 MIRV ceiling.

-- Brezhnev insisted that Backfire was not a strategic bomber, and provided some rough figures on the maximum operational radius of the aircraft to support his contention.

-- We then proposed a tougher version of the fallback we had discussed at the NSC:

- it included a five year interim agreement, limiting Backfire to 275 aircraft through 1982.

- The number of surface ships equipped with 600-2500 km SLCMs would be limited to a ceiling of 25 in this same five-year period.

-- The other provisions of the proposal were as we had originally proposed except that we also proposed reductions to 2300 by 1982.

-- Brezhnev did not reject our position but offered a counterproposal which remains the present Soviet position:

- He accepted our approach on ALCMs -- to treat them as MIRVed vehicles with the exception of wanting to count the B-1 as three MIRVed .

vehicles (this was not serious).

- He accepted our proposal for defining a heavy missile on the basis of throw weight.

- He offered to give a written commitment that Backfire would not be given a capability against the US.

- He reiterated their position that all SLCMs and land-launched cruise missiles should be limited to 600 km.

- He offered to consider reductions to a level even below 2300.

-- Considering the Brezhnev position in February, we decided to try to defer Backfire and sea-based cruise missiles for a limited period.

-- We proposed:

- To complete the Vladivostok Agreement along with other provisions agreed in Geneva: specifically, we added the limitations on air-launched cruise missiles which included counting heavy bombers equipped with 600-2500 km ALCMs in the 1320 MIRV limit. (See chart)

- To set aside the Backfire, sea-launched, and land-launched cruise missile issues in an interim agreement to last through January 1979. Backfire production would be frozen, and testing of SLCMs permitted up to 2500 km but no deployment.

-- In March, this approach was also rejected by Brezhnev.

-- He characterized the US proposal as moving backward from our position in January; in particular, he criticized the withdrawal of our proposal for a 600 km limit on submarine SLCMs.

-- He claimed it was "unrealistic" to think it would be easier to ban long range cruise missiles after they had been tested and even produced.

-- He proposed that we reconsider the proposal they had made at the conclusion of the January negotiations in Moscow.

* * * * *

-- The Verification Panel has been looking at alternative approaches for resolving the current deadlock.

-- We have come up with two basic approaches to present for your consideration (refer to chart).

[FYI: There is a chart describing the basic proposals.]

I. Maintain February Position

-- The first approach would be to maintain our present position as put forward in February.

-- The argument for this approach is that the Soviets will not give it serious consideration unless we stick to our position.

Variations on the February Proposal

-- In light of the flat rejection, however, we might consider some modification of the terms to make this approach more interesting to the Soviets.

[FYI: Refer to chart on Variations on the February proposal.]

A. The first variation we considered was to extend the ban on ALCMs over 2500 km in the Vladivostok Agreement to cover all cruise missiles in the permanent agreement.

- This would assure the Soviets that regardless of the outcome of the follow-on negotiations, there would be a ban on SLCMs and land-launched cruise missiles over 2500 km.

B. Since adding the ban on all cruise missiles above 2500 km to the Vladivostok Agreement might reduce our leverage for negotiating acceptable limits on Backfire, we might consider dropping the idea of an interim agreement entirely. This would leave Backfire, SLCMs and land-based cruise missiles entirely free -- but presumably candidates for SALT III.

[redacted]

C. A third variation is to extend the period of the interim agreement to October 1980, which would be a period of three years after the entry into force of the Vladivostok Agreement to negotiate follow-on limitations on Backfire and sea- and land-launched cruise missiles.

- This would have more of an impact on the US SLCM program since initial deployment is currently scheduled for early 1980; however, we could continue to test SLCMs out to 2500 km for the next four years, thus making a lower range limit almost impossible.

- Even so, the temporary ban risks becoming a permanent one; especially if Congress continues to cut SLCM funding.

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II. Reductions Proposal

-- The second basic approach we considered was to go back to the concept of solving all the issues in one agreement, by taking up Brezhnev's offer on reductions. We would propose to include reductions to 2150 by 1982, and to include a reduction of 100 SS-9s on the Soviet side.

-- If they reduced heavy missiles, we would fall off our demand for strict numerical limits on Backfire; however, we would ask for a Soviet statement on the total number of Backfires to be produced through 1985.

- We would also take Brezhnev up on his offer to give us assurances that Backfire would not be given an intercontinental capability, and might also seek other collateral constraints on Backfire refueling, basing, etc.

-- The cruise missile limitations would be similar to our January discussion.

-- SLCMs over 600 km on submarines are banned, but permitted on surface ships and land up to 2500 km in range; ALCMs are counted as MIRVs, banned on other aircraft.

-- We would also like to get a freeze on SS-18 deployment so that all of their permitted heavy missiles would not be MIRVed.

- If the freeze were effective as of the end of this year, after a reduction of 100 they would be left with about 134 SS-18s and about 92 SS-9s, but in the more likely case of a freeze in October 1977, they would have 188 SS-18s and about 20 SS-9s.

Assessment:

Summing up, we have to consider where we would be in either of the two approaches as well as the case of no agreement:

-- If we stick with the last proposal, we would thereby be betting that after five months of deadlock, Brezhnev will switch his position; the problem is that all last year we argued that the Soviets would finally cave on Backfire and they have not.

-- If we want to string out the negotiations, then this probably guarantees it.

-- It has the virtue of displaying our refusal to budge; if the talks collapse we could defend it; if we add the 2500 km range limit for all cruise missiles, particularly through 1980, we have to compare whether this outcome is better than the reductions option.

-- In the reductions option we could deploy longer range ship-based missiles but in the interim agreement approach we could not; Backfire would reach 270 by October 1980, while running free in the reductions proposal, but the total Backfire in 1980 would be about the same, because production will not increase until late in 1980.

In short, the interim agreement may not buy us much. Thus, we could consider dropping it altogether -- but this approach is likely to be strongly resisted by the Soviets; Backfire runs free; but all we obtain compared to the reductions option is the freedom to deploy SLCMs, on submarines.

The reductions option has what most critics have wanted for SALT III, namely low level reductions, and throw weight reductions.

-- Our forces would not be severely affected at the 2150 level, but the Soviets would have to take down over 400 missiles and bombers; CIA estimates they would reduce about 225 ICBMs, 128 SLBMs and 70 bombers.

-- To be realistic, however, we should recognize that the Soviets might accept reductions, but will resist specific reductions of heavy missiles.

-- This approach has the advantage of picking up the main thread of the negotiations, as the Soviets suggested in their last reply, and it would be defensible in terms of meeting SALT objectives, but would be criticized for dropping Backfire and eliminating cruise missiles on submarines.

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[Optional]

One way to handle these options is to reaffirm the interim agreement approach, but tell the Soviets if they want to go back to the other options. we would then propose reductions to 2150; this way we might smoke out the Soviet fall back, and you could decide later how to handle the details of reductions if they accept the idea in principle.