

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

24 March 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 24 March 1969

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Godfrey noted that it was relatively quiet over the weekend. He reported the loss of an outpost just west of the Plaine des Jarres.

D/ONE noted that he has some extra copies of the memorandum on the Sino/Soviet dispute.

Carver noted that the weekend was quiet but that all hands were hard at work reacting to a MACV request for a review of our base areas. He commented that OER developed a response which was cabled to Saigon on Sunday.

Maury reported that this afternoon [redacted] will be briefing the Subcommittee on Bomber Defense of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

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*The Director called the DD/S&T's attention to John Finney's article on the ABM debate in the Sunday New York Times and to Finney's article on the SS-9 in today's New York Times. The Director asked the DD/S&T for his views on both articles.

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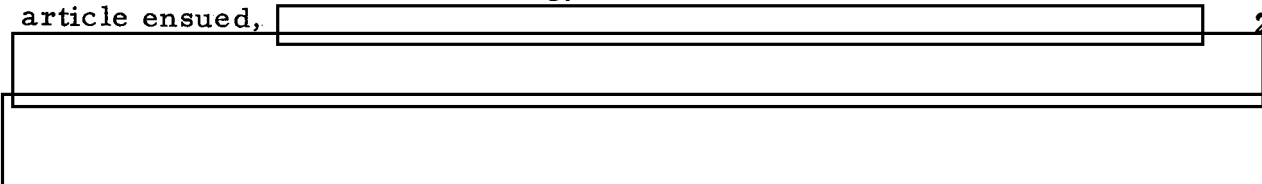


The Director expressed his opinion that we might wish to review our judgment that a new Soviet nuclear-powered attack submarine has been identified, as reported in today's CIB on page 4. DD/S&T noted that this identification was the result of considerable analysis.

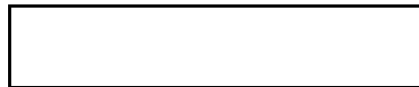
*The Director asked D/ONE to review the Djilas article in the Sunday New York Times Magazine and to report on any variance with our Estimates.

The Director called attention to 'Notes and Comment,' contained in the 22 March issue of The New Yorker and reporting on a speech by George Wald, professor of biology at Harvard. A discussion of the article ensued,

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L. K. White

*Extracted and sent to action officer

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Pro and Con on the 'Modified' ABM

President Nixon's announcement of his decision to go ahead with a modified antiballistic missile program has set off, as predicted, an intense debate over the wisdom of deploying the Sentinel—or, as the Pentagon has renamed it—the Safeguard system. Last week the debate was centered in two televised Senate hearings on the merits of the program: before the Armed Services Committee, where Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird faced

friendly questioning, and before the Foreign Relations Committee, where he faced hostile questioning. It was shaping up as a new great debate covering not only military strategy but foreign policy as well, with a close vote forecast when Congress finally has to pass on the Administration's proposal. What follows are some of the arguments, pro and con, on the ABM issues as they began emerging last week.

PRO

CON

Will the ABM system slow down the arms race?

Since the proposed system is defensive in nature and designed to protect the nation's retaliatory strike capability, it is not "provocative." Secretary Laird said it "will require no reaction at all from the Soviet Union."

Deployment of an ABM system will accelerate the atomic arms race, prompting the Soviet Union to expand its offensive forces, thus setting off another spiral in the action-reaction cycle of the arms race.

Will deployment encourage arms talks?

By deploying its own ABM system, the United States will strengthen its bargaining hand in any negotiations. The Soviet Union is already deploying an ABM system and there is no indication that it will become disinterested in arms talks now that the United States is deploying one. In fact, Mr. Laird said, the modified deployment gives the Russians "an added incentive to negotiate a meaningful agreement on limitation both of offensive and defensive weapons."

A U.S. initiative to deploy an ABM system will complicate and perhaps obstruct long-discussed plans for the United States and the Soviet Union to discuss a limitation on their offensive and strategic weapons and, as Senator Albert Gore put it, "ultimately could degrade our deterrent."

Will the ABM system enhance national security?

With its recent buildup in offensive force, the Soviet Union could require a "first-strike" capability by the mid-1970's. "If the Soviet threat turns out to be, as the evidence now indicates, an attempt to erode our deterrent capability," Mr. Laird said, "we must be in a position to convince them that a first strike would always involve unacceptable risks."

With its Minuteman, Polaris and bomber forces, the United States has more than enough deterrent power to absorb an attack and still retaliate devastatingly against the Soviet Union. As the Polaris missiles are replaced by Poseidons, Senator Stuart Symington asked, "Is there any reason to believe that our Poseidon force will be vulnerable to pre-emptive attack during the early nineteen-seventies?"

Will it forestall counter measures?

Admittedly offensive counter measures can be taken. But an ABM system complicates the problem of an attacker and forces him to allocate more of his resources to offensive weapons. Some warheads may get through, but in defending missile sites—in contrast to population centers—an air-tight defense is not needed.

The Soviet Union, as well as the United States, can easily overwhelm any ABM system by allocating more warheads to a target or sending in decoys and penetration aids.

Is it a feasible system?

From all the tests of components thus far, the system should work as planned. And again perfection is not needed when protecting missiles.

A system so complex and unable to be tested under combat conditions cannot be expected to work the first time it is put to a test.

Is the modified ABM an improvement for defending cities?

A system to protect populations against large scale attack is unfeasible, although it is practical to build a defense against a small scale attack such as Communist China might launch. The protection of the strategic forces is the best defense of populations since it will help deter an attack.

By its reorientation of the ABM system, the Pentagon is now proposing to defend holes in the ground not people—and see if you can sell that to the voters back home. Senator Charles Percy said he is not convinced the ABM "adds one iota to our national security."

Is the system essential to meet the Chinese threat?

Admittedly the Chinese missile program has slipped. But still it appears that by the mid 1970's China will have a force of about two dozen missiles and, Mr. Laird said, "pose a threat to our people and our property." With such a small force, China might be so irrational as to be tempted to strike first before all its nuclear capability was wiped out by the United States.

China has yet to test-fire an ICBM and for the foreseeable future it will not acquire enough missile force to threaten the U.S. And Russia has been deterred by the U.S. retaliatory capability. Senator J. W. Fulbright accused Mr. Laird of invoking the "technique of fear" to sell the program.

SS-9 Helps Administration Score Points in Missile Debate

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 23—

By stripping away some of the secrecy about SS-9, the large Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile, the Administration has apparently won the opening round in the Senate debate over a missile defense system.

Privately some Senate opponents of an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system concede that the Administration, in the first week of Congressional testimony in defense of its safeguard system, has made a presumptive case that additional steps must be taken to defend the nation's nuclear deterrent against the SS-9.

What the Administration has yet to establish, however, in the opinion of these opponents, is that the Safeguard system is the most effective or cheapest way to defend the deterrent force of Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Alternatives Drafted

To recapture the initiative in the debate, therefore, the opponents are drafting deterrent-protection alternatives to an ABM system, such as placing some of the Minuteman missile silos on the bottom of the Great Lakes, where they would be immune from detection and protected by a layer of water against the warheads of the SS-9.

That some of the opponents should be drafting alternatives rather than taking issue with the Administration's basic premise that the nation's nuclear deterrent is threatened reflects a significant shift in the debate in favor of the Administration. What probably caused the shift, more than any other factor, was SS-9.

SS-9 is not a new factor in the secret war games played by the Pentagon to work out the nation's nuclear strategy. The Soviet Union started deploying the SS-9 in underground silos in 1966, a fact quickly detected by United States reconnaissance satellites.

In terms of the ABM debate, however, what was new was the way Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird publicly introduced the SS-9 to the Senators and the American public in his initial appearances last week before the Senate Armed Services Committee and before the Disarmament Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

First Open Discussion

Never before had the Pentagon openly discussed the SS-9, and the fact that Mr. Laird chose to declassify intelligence information about the missile prompted Senator J. W. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, to complain that the Defense Secretary was in-

cluding in the "technique of fear" to sell his Safeguard program.

Mr. Laird staked his case for the Safeguard program largely on the SS-9. His argument basically went like this:

¶It is apparent that the Soviet Union by deploying the SS-9, is intent on acquiring a "first strike" capability—or an ability to launch such a devastating attack on American missile and bomber forces that the United States could not retaliate.

¶With its large warhead and accuracy, the SS-9 would be capable of knocking out a large portion of the 1,000-missile Minuteman force, even those sitting in the security of super-hardened silos. The deterrent force of Polaris submarines, with some 656 missiles, is threatened by Soviet anti-submarine warfare developments.

¶Therefore, if it is going to maintain its deterrent strength, the United States has no alternative but to protect some of the Minuteman bases with the Safeguard system against the SS-9. Under phase I of the Administration's Safeguard plan, two Minuteman bases—one in Montana, the other in North Dakota—would be protected initially, with the protection extended to other Minuteman bases if the Soviet threat continued to grow.

Analyses Differ

Mr. Laird's description of the SS-9, and of the Soviet plans for deploying and using it, at times impressed some Senators as confusing if not contradictory. But that may reflect the facts that there are differences within the intelligence community over the significance of the SS-9.

According to well-informed Congressional sources, there are differences on these critical points:

SIZE OF WARHEAD — Mr. Laird and David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense, credited the missile with a 20-25-megaton warhead. The Central Intelligence Agency reportedly believes the warhead is much smaller, probably nearer five megatons. That would make it more comparable to the United States Titan II intercontinental missile—and at one point, in fact, Mr. Packard described the SS-9 as a "Titan II-like weapon."

A megaton is the equivalent of a million tons of TNT. The bomb that fell on Hiroshima was the equivalent of 20,000 tons of TNT.

RATE OF DEPLOYMENT — Mr. Laird estimated that more than 200 SS-9's were already deployed and said "hard" intelligence information received as recently as December that the Soviet Union was con-

tinuing deployment, contrary to earlier intelligence estimates by the United States. Graphs presented by Mr. Packard projected that the Soviet Union would have nearly 500 SS-9's by 1975. But this projection assumes that the missiles will be deployed at the relatively high rate of the past.

In his statement in January on the nation's defense posture, former defense Secretary Clark M. Clifford predicted that the rate of increase in Soviet intercontinental missiles "will be considerably smaller over the next two or three years. Beyond that point, our estimates become less firm."

ACCURACY — Mr. Packard credited the missile with an accuracy of around six-tenths of a mile. With that accuracy and a 20-megaton warhead, he pointed out, the missile could destroy a Minuteman silo. Other intelligence estimates reportedly do not credit the missile with such high accuracy.

PURPOSE OF WEAPON — Some intelligence analysts believe the missile is a retaliatory weapon aimed primarily at cities. Late last year, for example, Alain Enthoven, former Assistant Defense Secretary for Systems Analysis, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the SS-9 was built for "a second strike purpose." But Mr. Laird took the position that "this weapon can only be aimed at destroying our retaliatory force" and thus was a "first strike" weapon.

Pessimistic Estimates

In his Congressional appearances, Mr. Laird apparently was using the most pessimistic intelligence estimates about what the Soviet Union was up to with the SS-9.

To that extent, the ABM debate was becoming reminiscent of the "missile gap" debate a decade ago. Then a "gap," which never materialized in fact, was created in political debate by using the most pessimistic assumptions about Soviet missile production capability.

As one security aide to President Kennedy now deeply involved in the ABM debate commented: "Plug in the different words and it is just like the missile gap debate."

In its analysis of the Safeguard program, the President's science advisory committee reportedly cast doubt on the validity of the intelligence estimates being used to justify the decision to deploy the system. The committee also was said to have questioned whether the Safeguard system was the proper response to the Soviet offensive buildup.

On the basis of the more pessimistic estimates. "I hope the intelligence estimates that go out to 1975 are not true," he observed at one point on the Disarmament Subcommittee, "but I cannot assume the projections are untrue."

Even accepting Mr. Laird's estimates, however, there was a question in the minds of some Senators as to how the SS-9 force that he was projecting for 1975 would have a "first strike" capability against the Minuteman force.

Since the Minuteman silos are so widely dispersed—as much as 10 miles apart—one SS-9 warhead would be able to destroy only the minutemen. With 500 SS-9 missiles in 1975, therefore, the Soviet Union would be able to destroy only about half the Minuteman force, presuming each SS-9 worked perfectly.

To destroy 80 per cent of the Minuteman force—which was the ratio that Mr. Packard suggested would eliminate Minuteman as a retaliatory force—the Soviet Union theoretically would need 800 SS-9's carrying the 20-megaton warhead.

Multiple Warheads

But if it were to be audacious as to launch a first strike, the Soviet Union could not assume that all the SS-9's would work perfectly. Therefore using a 50 per cent reliability rate—about the present reliability rate of the Minuteman missiles—the Soviet Union would need 1,600 SS-9's carrying a single warhead.

While never specifically stated by Mr. Laird, it was apparent from his statistics that the SS-9 could become a "first strike" weapon only when equipped with multiple warheads, known as MIRV's (for multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles).

At one point Mr. Laird suggested that the SS-9 might be able to carry four MIRV warheads. That would mean that a 500-missile SS-9 force would be capable of launching 2,000 warheads, or presumably enough to eliminate the Minuteman as a retaliatory force.

But the MIRV warheads would be smaller and therefore would have to come closer to their target to knock out a Minuteman silo. Mr. Packard suggested at one point that a five-megaton warhead would have to land within three-tenths of a mile to destroy a Minuteman. Within the intelligence community there are doubts that the Soviet Union can develop that large and that accurate a multiple warhead by 1975.

But if the SS-9's equipped with MIRV's were ready by 1975, then by the same token, it is being argued within the Senate Disarmament Sub-

committee, the Soviet Union can be fearful that the United States is attempting to acquire a "first strike" capability by developing multiple warheads for its Minuteman and Poseidon missiles.

In the relatively near future, the Defense Department will start placing three MIRV warheads on each of the 1,000 Minuteman missiles and 10 on each of the 656 Poseidons, the new missile developed for the Polaris atomic submarines. The Defense Department has emphasized that these multiple warheads will have pinpoint accuracy, thus presumably contributing to Soviet fears that they are aimed at missile sites rather than cities.

As seen by some prominent scientists advising Senate opponents of an anti-ballistic missile system, the Soviet decision to deploy the SS-9 in large numbers came about in this way:

The Soviet Union some five years ago began deploying its Galosh ABM system around Moscow. As a counter to overcome this defense system, the United States began developing MIRV warheads. The Soviet Union then became fearful the United States was acquiring a "first strike" capability. So as a counter, the Soviet Union began to develop and deploy SS-9's with multiple warheads.

It is this action-reaction cycle in the arms race that is beginning to bother some members of the Disarmament Sub-

committee, such as Senators John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, Albert Gore, Democrat of Tennessee, and Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey more than the specific technical issues of the Safeguard system.

They fear that the two superpowers are nearing "the point of no return" in their escalating arms race. Their argument is that once both sides deploy multiple warheads, it will no longer be possible to police an arms control agreement with reconnaissance satellites, since neither side will know how many warheads are sitting in the nose cone of a missile that shows up in a satellite photograph. The only alternative would be on-site inspection, and that presumably would be unacceptable to either side as part of an arms control agreement.

Their proposal, therefore, is that before deploying an ABM system, and thus perhaps setting off a counter-reaction on the Soviet side, the United States make one more effort, perhaps the last, to reach an agreement limiting the number of offensive and defensive strategic weapons.

Mr. Laird and President Nixon have both said they do not expect deployment of the Safeguard system to provoke a counteraction from the Soviet Union because the Safeguard is being deployed solely as a defensive measure.