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SALT: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Through the first two weeks of SALT TWO, the Soviets have put forward a maximum negotiating position based on retaining the provisions of the interim agreement and adding limits on those systems it does not include. To this end, Moscow has proposed the withdrawal of US forward based systems and, in effect, a ban on nuclear-armed strategic bombers and air-to-surface missiles (ASMs). Soviet formulations on the latter issue have apparently been designed partly in the hope of restraining present or planned US programs like the B-1 bomber and new ASMs such as SRAM. The Soviets have also raised the issue of qualitative limitations in a manner which suggests that they are interested in discussing MIRVs. For its part, the US continues to hammer on the theme of achieving equal aggregate levels of central strategic systems and missile throw-weight. The Soviets have expressed an interest in having some agreements ready in time for Brezhnev's expected visit to the US next spring.

Soviets Seek to Ban the Bombers, and Raise Qualitative Limitations

1. The Soviets have proposed limits on strategic bombers in a manner which is aimed at the US B-1 bomber program, the on-going ASM program, and at nuclear-armed B-52s. In his statement at the plenary session on 1 December, Semenov called for a ban on the use of strategic bombers for delivery of nuclear weapons, including ASMs. He also proposed banning the development, testing, and deployment of new types of strategic aircraft, and said that both sides should be limited to modernization of existing bombers.

2. Concomitant with the bomber ban, the Soviets have proposed a ban on the development, testing and deployment of ASMs. In presenting these proposals, Semenov alleged they "would constitute substantial measures of quantitative and qualitative limitation of an important type of strategic offensive arms."

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3. In a subsequent conversation, Soviet delegate Grinevsky stated that the Soviets had deliberately introduced the term "qualitative" into Semenov's presentation, and asked if the US side was going to bring up qualitative limitations. He affirmed that when he spoke of qualitative limitations he was thinking particularly of MIRVs. On several previous occasions the Soviet representatives have tacitly encouraged the US side to raise an issue they want to talk about.

4. There is no good indication of what the Soviet position on MIRVs will be, if indeed they have yet formulated one. Their thinking may have been foreshadowed, however, by a conversation Garthoff had with Soviet DCM and resident authority on SALT in Washington, Yuly Vorontsov, prior to the current round of talks. After Garthoff advanced the US position on equality of central systems and throw-weights, Vorontsov said the Soviet position on these issues would depend heavily on the US position on MIRVs. He said he did not mean a freeze, since the US had thousands of MIRVs and the Soviets none. He indicated he was speaking instead of a situation in which there would be no MIRVs. The US delegation's instructions presently call for holding open the question of qualitative limitations.

Forward Based Systems

5. Semenov also used the sessions of 28 November and 1 December to refine further the limitations the Soviets are proposing on FBS. Citing Moscow's position that any limitations agreement must include all nuclear weapons systems capable of striking the territory of the other side, he called for the inclusion of all carrier-based aircraft irrespective of the location of carriers, on the grounds that carriers are mobile strategic systems. He again attacked forward basing of US submarines and proposed that all ballistic missile submarines within range of the territory of the other side be withdrawn and that submarine bases in third countries be simultaneously liquidated. Interestingly enough, when challenged on the issue of carriers, Soviet advisor Mazerkin, a naval captain, assured Col. FitzGerald that "our aircraft carrier when it is completed" would also be included.

Soviet Negotiating Tactics and Goals

6. Moscow's approach to the current round of talks is beginning to take shape. The Soviets clearly want to incorporate the provisions of the interim agreement into a permanent agreement, and also to limit those systems not included in the interim agreement. This would be to their advantage since, in effect, it would mean negotiating on those systems

in which the US has an advantage--i.e., strategic air and forward based systems in their various forms, while leaving untouched the numerical advantage in ICBMs/SLBMs Moscow gained in the interim agreement. Soviet delegates Pleshakov, and Grinevsky, however, have indicated that once the "other systems" are defined and limited, those included in the interim agreement could then be re-examined. Grinevsky has also conceded that the Soviet presentation is a "maximalist" one, and has indicated that their position on several issues is negotiable.

7. On several occasions the Soviets have hinted that they would like some agreements reached fairly quickly. In commenting on the "add on" approach the Soviets preferred in negotiating the offensive weapons treaty, Vorontsov indicated that the Soviets would like to have measures ready for signature "at the May summit." One of the Soviet advisers at the talks also said that he had understood "through press reports" that Brezhnev would be visiting Washington in the spring, and indicated an interest in having some kind of SALT-related agreement ready for the visit.

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