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SUBJECT The SALT II Agreement

JOHN CHANCELLOR: Public opinion polls have shown this year that the American people believe the Russians are likely to cheat on the SALT II treaty limiting nuclear weapons. This is a widely held belief despite the fact that officials in a position to know, including former Secretary of State Kissinger, say the Russians did not cheat in any meaningful way on the first SALT treaty.

In any case, verification of the treaty will be one of the key issues in the Senate debate on the treaty, and we've asked Ford Rowan to look into the whole business.

FORD ROWAN: What if the Russians cheat? Suppose they build bigger and better weapons than allowed by SALT? Would the United States find out?

The United States relies on space satellites and other electronic monitors to watch what the Soviets are doing. Pictures from spy-in-the-sky satellites are secret and much more detailed and revealing than these unclassified photographs. But the secrets have been compromised.

In two espionage cases, the Russians bought information about three satellite systems: Keyhole, which takes photographs; [unintelligible], which listens to missile telemetry; and Argus, monitors radio transmissions.

But the biggest problem started back on Earth, in Iran, when the U.S. was forced to close down monitoring stations near the Soviet border, a major loss, according to the former head of Air Force Intelligence.

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GEORGE KEEGAN: The SALT treaty, as I presently understand it, cannot, in any way, be verified. The assumptions and public statements made by this Administration regarding verification, in my best judgment, are fraudulent and so intended to deceive the American people.

ROWAN: The new SALT treaty would limit the development of new and bigger missiles, as well as the number of multiple warheads (MIRVs) that can be placed on missiles.

When the Russians launch a missile at their test site in Turatom (?), American infrared satellites pick up the heat of the rocket engines. The two Iranian listening posts are missed at this point because they had a clear look at the test site and the early stages of flight. But as the missile gains altitude, it is monitored by radar stations farther away in Turkey, by other satellites, and, as it nears the Pacific, by ships and radar stations in Alaska.

Former CIA officer Herbert Scoville says these down-range monitors can check to see if the Soviets have violated SALT limits on MIRVs.

HERBERT SCOVILLE: I am absolutely certain we can verify the SALT II agreement, as it is now written. Not only do we have all these capabilities, but the SALT II agreement has specifically written into it a large number of provisions which facilitate verification, which actually will improve our intelligence over what we have today.

ROWAN: To improve intelligence, the Administration has ordered a crash program to use such things as U-2 spy planes along the Soviet border to make up for the loss of the Iranian bases. But some say it would not be enough to compensate for the losses in Iran.

DANIEL GRAHAM: I think it's fraudulent for the Administration to come forward and try to give the American people the impression that you can replace those capabilities. Those capabilities gave us a 24-hour watch, with all sorts of sensors, over the two most important facilities in the Soviet Union for verification.

ROWAN: CIA Director Stansfield Turner has angered some leaders in the Administration by conceding that it would take five years before the CIA recovered the capabilities lost in Iran. Furthermore, Turner says there's no way he can be certain SALT can be verified.

Is SALT worth the risk the Russians will cheat? In a recent speech, Turner said he'd leave that up to the President and his advisers.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: The policymaker must also say, in view of the fact Turner hasn't got 101 percent assurance on any of these things, are the risks to our country worth it? Are the benefits of having these controls worth whatever degree of possibility there is from the monitoring evaluation that it could be circumscribed, or circumvented, or whatever the right word is -- cheat.

ROWAN: President Carter and Defense Secretary Brown have insisted that the United States will have the ability to adequately verify Soviet actions under the SALT agreement. They argue that without SALT and its rules forbidding concealment, it would be even harder to find out what the Soviets were doing.

CHANCELLOR: Senator Henry Jackson released the text of a speech today in which he mounts a very tough attack on the Carter Administration's stand on the SALT treaty. The White House is saying that if the Senate votes amendments and changes to the treaty, that will force the Soviets into new demands, which could kill the treaty.

Jackson, in his speech of today, says that attitude is appeasement -- his word -- ominously reminiscent, he says, of statements made by an unprepared British Government as Adolf Hitler prepared for war.