

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
Routing Slip

TO:		ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
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15	D/OEA				
16	C/PAD/OEA				
17	SA/IA				
18	AO/DCI				
19	C/IPD/OIS				
20	SA/NPI ✓				
21	ES ✓		✓		
22	SUSPENSE <u>29 JULY</u> Date				

Remarks:

Executive Secretary
7/22/50
Date

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22 July 1980

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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Arms Control Parody

The Reagan administration has decided not to renew negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear test ban, pending efforts to improve verification of the threshold test ban it is currently observing. This represents a first hesitant step away from the whole notion of negotiating arms agreements with the Soviet Union. As the threshold test ban particularly illustrates, the arms control process has by now become a parody of itself.

Technically, the threshold test ban treaty is still pending. It was signed in 1974, but Senate ratification was never pushed by the Nixon or Ford administrations. The Carter administration withdrew it from Senate confirmation, fearing that ratification of a threshold test ban would interfere with its efforts to negotiate a comprehensive ban. But both the U.S. and the Soviet Union issued pledges to abide by the unratified treaty—just as the Reagan administration now promises not to “undercut” the unratified SALT-II.

In backgrounding the press on the test ban problems, administration spokesmen are using guarded language concerning doubts about whether we can verify that Soviet tests fall within the 150-kiloton threshold allowed by the unratified treaty. But verifying the treaty is not our problem at all. We have verified it. The Russians are cheating. Now what?

The reason for the guarded language is that the seismic data used for verification are recorded in the relativistic language of probabilities. We can record a seismic shock, and translate this into a probability that the explosion was within some given range of possible yields. For this reason, the U.S. keeps its tests well below the threshold, observing a design limit of 130 kilotons to make clear we have complied with the 150-kiloton limit.

The Soviet tests, by contrast, have repeatedly produced prima facie violations. In two 1979 tests, for example, our monitors indicated explosions between 110 and 440 kilotons. The most likely yield was 220 kilotons, and the probability of a yield of more than 150 was 82%. When the Americans pro-

tested one of these explosions, the Soviets blandly replied that they were “not at fault.”

These were not the largest Soviet tests; some have been in the 300-kiloton range. But probability curves are asymptotic, never reaching absolute zero. So there will always be some tiny portion of the curve under the 150-kiloton limit—always room for some less-than-reasonable doubt that the Soviets have breached the treaty.

So we protest in private, but do not go public accusing the Soviets of a violation. Since we can never be totally certain, we refrain from public charges that might “disrupt” further arms negotiations.

At some point we're going to have to stop kidding ourselves. We now have in hand the spectacular Soviet violations of the biological weapons convention. The reasonable conclusion has to be that they have systematically violated the threshold test ban as well. While the terms of SALT-I are so vague it's almost impossible to “violate” them, the Soviet deployment of massive throw-weight in the SS-19 missile vitiated the essential bargain involved. In SALT-II, the issue of the Backfire bomber was “settled” by Chairman Brezhnev handing President Carter an unsigned paper promising not to give the bomber intercontinental range—a capability it already had.

These kinds of negotiations manifestly deserve to be disrupted—not least to preserve some chance of meaningful arms control if the Soviets ever come to feel they must bargain seriously. The administration's critics are saying that its deferral of any comprehensive test ban talks mean it is not serious about arms control. But the opposite is true—a serious approach to arms control demands a refusal to negotiate new treaties while old ones are being broken. The question that needs to be asked is how, with the Soviets developing biological weapons and supplying “yellow rain” to their puppets, the administration can justify any arms negotiations at all.