



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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R.I. Spiers

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March 13, 1970

MEMORANDUM

TO: U - The Under Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM: PM - Ronald I. Spiers
SUBJECT: Preferred ABM/MIRV Limitations in SALT

We believe that US security interests would be best served by a MIRV ban and very low ABM levels in SALT. This does not mean a decision to that effect need be taken before Vienna or that such an agreement would be feasible there; it does mean that the Delegation should be instructed to keep open the option of a MIRV ban and to probe fully the Soviet position on controlling MIRVs, while moving at Vienna for a limited agreement providing quantitative limitations on major offensive systems (thus curbing as soon as possible the present SS-9 build-up, in particular), and an ABM limitation at as low a level as is negotiable.

A MIRV ban may not be in US interests unless there is a relatively low ABM level, but a low ABM level is in our interests regardless of whether we ban MIRVs if, in accepting a low level, we buy an SS-9 freeze. Apart from the complexities of the MIRV issue, and difficulties in reaching decisions on it, this is an additional reason for pressing in the first instance on ABM limitations.

Reasons for Seeking a MIRV Ban and a Low ABM Level

In the absence of a MIRV ban and low ABM level, the US would rapidly move ahead in the early 1970's in offensive capability--but in the mid and late 1970's the Soviets would be able to make use of the high MIRV potential of the large SS-9 missile (which has a seven-fold advantage in payload

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capacity over Minuteman). Thus, despite the US lead in MIRV deployment, with no SALT limitation the USSR could have up to 1,700 "hard target" reentry vehicles (RVs) out of a total of up to 3,600 RVs by 1975, and up to 4,600 RVs, including 3,300 hard target RVs, by the end of the decade. The US force is planned to grow to over 7,000 RVs by 1976, and Soviet planners must assume continuing improvements in US accuracies would give them a cross-targeting capability against hard targets. Each side will be impelled by these developments to intensify its own efforts as a hedge against uncertainties which could imperil its own strategic deterrent, thus driving a spiral of strategic arms competition. Each side would no doubt take actions to reassure that it retained a secure second-strike capability, but this would involve a process marked by uncertainties, instabilities, and high costs with no gain in security.

On the ABM side, the Soviet 64-launcher Moscow deployment is virtually completed, but no additional deployments have been started. We estimate, however, that in the absence of arms control limitations the Soviets could have up to 2,100 ABM launchers by the end of the decade. (The full Safeguard deployment is scheduled to be completed by the end of 1977; it is planned to have 879 launchers.)

With no (or high) limits on ABMs, and no MIRV ban, the momentum of the arms competition clearly will require major new US strategic programs in this decade beyond those presently projected. Moreover, this intensified competition will involve strategic instabilities. It would be highly desirable to avoid such a situation through arms control banning MIRVs and holding ABMs to a low level.

The MIRV-ABM Relationship

MIRVs serve two roles: to increase the numbers of targets hit, and/or to ensure penetration of ABM defenses. ABM seeks to reduce the number of penetrations and targets hit. Limitations on the two systems are ineluctably related.

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Since our cardinal aim is deterrence rather than a first-strike capability, we must assure our own retaliatory forces survivability and ability to penetrate defenses, but we do not need to aim beyond that to destroy enemy strategic capabilities. If the Soviets have similar basic aims, as they said at Helsinki, agreement on MIRV and ABM limitations may be possible.

With zero or very low ABM levels, we do not need capabilities to penetrate ballistic missile defenses. With high ABM levels (either allowed under an agreement, or in the absence of an agreement), we need MIRVs to assure adequate coverage and penetrability. Where the division between "low enough" and "too high" levels rests is not agreed, but full Safeguard ABM levels (say, about 1,000 launchers) is generally considered too high to justify the US foregoing MIRVs. This is true not so much because of the density of defensive interceptor missiles, but because any nation-wide or widely deployed system requires so many dispersed large ABM acquisition radars that the risks of clandestine SAM upgrading, covert ABM deployment, or post-abrogation rapid deployment of relatively short-lead time ABM interceptors, could imperil maintenance of our assured retaliatory penetration.

The obverse is not true. In the absence of a MIRV ban, it is still highly desirable to limit ABMs sharply, in order to limit Soviet defense, and since survivability of our retaliatory force can be better assured by other means than ABM defense, e.g., by constraining Soviet offensive forces, by retaining options for ULMS and advanced bombers, and by reducing uncertainties and instabilities.

To illustrate the point on survivability, it is evident that a Soviet "hard target" force of over 3,000 accurate reentry vehicles by the end of the decade could readily overwhelm a US ABM force much larger than Safeguard defending Minuteman sites. A MIRV ban, coupled with quantitative restrictions, would greatly reduce this threat, though not remove it entirely, due to the accuracy of the SS-9 and the possibility

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of improving the accuracy of the SS-11. But the main criterion remains the number of RVs surviving a first-strike which penetrate Soviet defenses, i.e., it depends both on the Soviet offensive force and the Soviet defensive force. With a MIRV ban and very low ABM levels, the US would have a survivable retaliatory capability.

Verification and Risks

A ban only on deployment of MIRVs could not be adequately verified, except perhaps by highly intrusive random on-site inspection of deployed missile warheads, which would almost certainly not be negotiable. Verification would have to center on monitoring a collateral ban on MIRV developmental and confidence flight testing. It would also be necessary in a collateral ban to prohibit flight testing of all multiple reentry vehicles, maneuverable reentry vehicles, and end-atmospheric penetration aids. It would be desirable to limit permitted missile flight tests to pre-announced firings on agreed ranges, in order to heighten the effectiveness of our national means of verification.

In our view (with which Defense takes issue), Soviet testing of multiple reentry vehicles has not advanced to a point which would make impractical a MIRV flight test ban.*

Verification of a zero ABM level would be easiest. A low limit on ABM deployment could, however, also be monitored by national means. Inclusion of negotiated limitations on ABM associated radars would be an important element in facilitating verification,

* US testing, on the other hand, has proceeded to the point where we could forego further tests and still deploy a MIRV designed to penetrate Soviet defenses with confidence. The Soviets may, therefore, not wish to accept a ban which precludes their catching up in the "MIRV gap." This, however, is a negotiability problem, rather than a verification problem, at least so far as we are concerned.

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as well as an important limitation on over-all ABM capability. The lower the permitted ABM level and the more geographically compact the deployment, the lower the numbers and density of associated ABM radars, and hence the less the risks of upgraded SAMs or SAMs with marginal ABM capability.

We believe that if the Soviet Union were prepared to agree to a MIRV ban and low ABM levels, they probably would not intend to violate the agreement. To do so, and be caught, would involve high political risks and costs. Nonetheless, we must of course weigh the consequences of cheating, however unlikely, and the above restrictions have been considered with an eye to our capability to verify Soviet compliance.

Strategic Implications

A MIRV ban and low ABM limitation would permit us to meet sufficiency criteria, in most cases more surely or less expensively, than leaving MIRVs uncontrolled and ABMs uncontrolled or limited to Safeguard or other high levels. The one exception would be limiting damage from small or accidental attacks, which would not be met or fully met by zero or low ABM levels. A minimal area defense of the US against accidental or small Chinese attacks could perhaps be met by a nation-wide thin deployment lower than the full Safeguard level, but it is not certain even this would curb the density of associated radars sufficiently to provide the high confidence against SAM upgrading that would be desired with a MIRV ban. In short, it may be necessary not only to choose between a China defense in the 1970's and low ABM levels, but also between a China defense and a MIRV ban.

Concurrence: INR/RSF - Mr. Perez *FP or RB*

- cc: S - Mr. Okun
- J - Mr. Getz
- EUR - Mr. Hillenbrand
- INR - Mr. Denney
- S/PC - Mr. Cargo
- L/PMO - Mr. Neuman
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