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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON D C 20301

January 28, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Implications of Major Reductions in Strategic Nuclear Forces

The attached paper responds to your request for an early, quick analysis of the implications of mutual US and Soviet reductions in the number of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles to 200-250.

This paper was prepared in conjunction with the Joint Staff and analysts in ISA, but has not been discussed with other elements in DoD.

A number of concerns, some but not all of which have been included in the paper, have been voiced during its drafting. Because it is important to underscore that some believe it is unproductive to give serious attention to such levels, even as goals, I mention these concerns as follows:

-- Such a level would require a fundamental change in US policy. Some regard it as so unrealistic as to be counter-productive to achieving the practical, and yet far-reaching, measures which may not be possible in SALT.

-- Such a level would require almost total reliance on retaliation against population and industry to deter attack.

-- At such levels, there would be great potential payoffs to violating limits, covertly deploying ABMs (or upgrading air defense missiles), enhancing civil defense, or concentrating defenses on the limited numbers of offensive vehicles permitted.

I want to emphasize that the paper is not a discussion of a potential SALT position and has not been prepared through DoD SALT processes. (Analysis of reductions possibilities for SALT is proceeding as part of the PSM-MSC-2 study.) Rather, it is an effort -- sharply constrained by the very short deadline -- to examine the implications of a hypothetical situation.

Harold Brown

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Attachment