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February 19, 1974

National Security Decision Memorandum 245

TO: The Secretary of Defense
The Deputy Secretary of State
The Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
The Chairman, U. S. SALT Delegation

SUBJECT: Instructions for the SALT Talks, Geneva,
February 19, 1974

The President has reviewed NSDM's 213, 216 and 233 and the work of the Verification Panel and has approved the following instructions for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks beginning on February 19, 1974, in Geneva.

1. The Delegation should make clear that the United States has undertaken an extensive review of both sides' approach to the negotiations. The overall U. S. objective continues to be a permanent agreement limiting strategic offensive arms which provides a high degree of equivalence in central strategic systems -- ICBM's, SLBM's and heavy bombers.
2. The Delegation should reemphasize that the U. S. considers the establishment of equal aggregate limits on the number, and substantially equal aggregate throw weight, of central strategic systems to be primary elements in establishing such equivalence. The Delegation should continue to support an initial aggregate ceiling for both sides of 2,350.
3. The Delegation should also state that, in the context of a permanent agreement, the U. S. supports phased mutual reductions consistent with equal aggregate numerical limits.
4. The Delegation should review in depth with the Soviets the underlying strategic conceptions that bear on the long-term emerging strategic relationship and agreements thereon. These are stability, essential equivalence, and verifiability.

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(Revised)

5. The Delegation should reaffirm the importance of controlling selective qualitative aspects of the strategic relationship and, in particular, the importance of controlling MIRV's on ICBM's promptly in order to preserve the survivability of deterrent forces, enhance strategic stability and reduce the risk of nuclear war. The SALT Basic Principles signed by President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev recognized the importance of such qualitative limitations and made clear that the process of future modernization should be in accordance with agreed conditions.

6. In this context, the Delegation should propose that priority consideration be given in the negotiations to the concept of establishing limitations on the throw weight of MIRVed missiles. Under this concept, each side should have the right to essentially the same aggregate throw weight for ICBM's with MIRV's. Within this equal level, each side would be able to deploy a specified number of ICBM's with MIRV's, the sum total (aggregate) throw weight of these ICBM's not to exceed an agreed level.* The Delegation should make clear that the proposed MIRV throw weight concept applies only to systems with true MIRV capability and not to existing MRV missiles. The Delegation may discuss the definitions of MIRV throw weight, MIRV and MRV after clearing its proposed definitions with Washington.

7. In elaborating the ICBM MIRV throw weight concept, the Delegation should emphasize that the U.S. attaches great importance to the principle that any agreement should be adequately verifiable by national technical means. The Delegation should set forth the problems of MIRV missile verification and attempt to elicit Soviet views on this issue without, at this time, discussing possible solutions.

8. In presenting the ICBM MIRV throw weight concept, the Delegation should explain that the U.S. does not exclude seeking a mutually acceptable concept for dealing with SLBM's and their MIRV's. If the Soviet side presses the Delegation on the question of SLBM MIRV limitations, the Delegation should explain that, provided the Soviet Union will limit ICBM MIRV throw weight to agreed levels, the U.S. is prepared to consider limitations on SLBM MIRV throw weight as well.

* While the Delegation should not discuss specific throw weight levels, the Delegation should be aware that the U.S. cannot accept throw weight levels for MIRVed ICBM's above the level represented by the Minuteman III program potential; furthermore, the U.S. will strive to achieve equal levels much below the Minuteman III potential level.

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9. In implementing the instructions contained in paragraphs three through eight above, the Delegation should refrain from mentioning any specific levels. If the Soviet side suggests any such specific throw weight level or program of reductions, the Delegation should seek instructions.

10. The Delegation should say that it believes an active exchange of views with the Soviet Delegation on the U.S. MIRV proposal is necessary in order to provide a foundation for progress in the negotiations.

11. If the Soviet Delegation inquires as to the status of prior U.S. proposals in areas not specifically mentioned above, the U.S. Delegation should indicate that it is the U.S. position to focus the present negotiations on the major concepts stated in the foregoing paragraphs. The Delegation should note that the resolution of other issues is dependent upon the development of a common approach to these major concepts and that it prefers to set aside for the present discussion of other issues.


Henry A. Kissinger

cc: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Director of Central Intelligence

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