

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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November 26, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT ELECT

FROM: DAVID AARON

SUBJECT: Additional Points Concerning Your
Last CIA Briefing

As I mentioned, there were several points in your last CIA briefing that I believe deserve further comment. They relate principally to SALT but also cover some aspects of CIA's operations.

1. Verification of Your Freeze Proposal. The briefing may have left you with the impression that the only way to verify your freeze proposal is to limit testing of new strategic systems. While that is an essential verification measure, it is also possible to monitor the deployment of new or modified strategic systems. For example, we can with high confidence monitor the deployment of the new fixed Soviet ICBM's. This, in fact, is why we can limit Soviet MIRV's since only the new Soviet ICBM's carry MIRV's.

2. Soviet Intentions -- Their Hardened Command Sites. The CIA briefer mentioned in passing that Soviet hardening of their command and control facilities was evidence that they wished to acquire a "war fighting" capability. This is by no means agreed in the strategic community.

Invulnerable command and control is essential for a second strike deterrent strategy in which one must ride out an enemy attack before responding. It is not needed for a first strike strategy. In this view, hardened command and control is a prudent step that casts little light on Soviet intentions.

You should also be aware that Soviet command and control installations were heretofore extremely soft (about 400 PSI). This would have made it possible to disable the Soviet land based ICBM force by attacking the much less numerous command post instead of the ICBM silos themselves.

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DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)

ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2015-071, document no. 6
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: December 02, 2016

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3. Soviet Intentions -- the Soviet Buildup. The steady progress in Soviet strategic and conventional power is cause for concern over their intentions. But a fundamental weakness in the intelligence community's approach has been that it only looks at one side of the problem. The upcoming CIA assessment of Soviet strategic intentions discussed at the briefing will leave out a vital factor -- what it is the United States doing with its strategic programs and the extent to which the Soviets may be reacting to them?

FRQA

The weakest part of our intelligence estimating process has been net assessment, that is, looking at both sides of the equation. Top national security policy makers have often known more about the status of Soviet arms programs than about American programs. The CIA's mandate runs to foreign intelligence and they are very reluctant to involve themselves in assessments of the interaction of foreign events or military developments and actions taken by the United States -- in part because the latter often involve delicate political judgments about U. S. policy.

The responsibility for net assessments has bounced between the NSC Staff and the Pentagon -- where it is currently housed. We will get you an example of its work on the U. S. -Soviet balance.

4. Who is Catching Whom? You made the comment that the Soviets are catching up in areas where they are behind but we are not catching up in areas where we are behind. The situation is that the Soviets are behind in accuracy, numbers of warheads and essentially lack a viable strategic bomber force. We are behind in the overall number of delivery systems, throw-weight and megatonnage.

The Soviets are catching up in accuracy and MIRV's as their technology improves. They are not apparently seeking a strategic bomber force. (The backfire is not the weapons system one would choose for that task, though it may have some strategic capability.)

We are diversifying our forces by developing cruise missiles to be based at sea and on aircraft. We are continuing to add to the numbers of MIRV's, and we have put ourselves in a position to dramatically increase our throw-weight with a new fixed ICBM and the Trident missiles. We are therefore preparing, if we so choose, to narrow the gap in throw-weight and also in numbers of delivery systems depending on how one views cruise missiles.

5. Liaison with Foreign Intelligence Services. George Bush may have discussed this subject with you privately. It is a very sensitive one. You should be aware of two things. First, this liaison relationship is always

a two-way street. Dean Rusk once told me that he would not share with the CIA his most personal and private conversations with foreign leaders because he was concerned that they might trade the information away. Second, the growing scandal concerning the Korean CIA and the concern about other foreign intelligence operations in the United States has brought sharp conflict between the Department of Justice and CIA. The CIA allegedly opposes vigorous Justice Department actions out of concern that this will jeopardize their liaison relationship with some of these same intelligence services. This is an issue that will land on your desk early in your Administration.

In preparing the Transition at CIA, we have agreed that "Liaison" should be addressed at one of your future weekly briefings.