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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ - XGDS

MINUTES
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Thursday, January 8, 1976

TIME: 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

PLACE: Cabinet Room, The White House

SUBJECT: SALT

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown
Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Dr. Fred Ikle
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Brent Scowcroft

Other Attendees

White House:	Mr. Richard Cheney, Assistant to the President Mr. William G. Hyland, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
State:	Mr. Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Counselor Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson
Defense:	Deputy Secretary William Clements Deputy Assistant Secretary (ISA) James P. Wade, Jr.
NSC Staff:	Colonel Richard T. Boverie

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ - XGDS (B) (3)
Classified by Brent Scowcroft

President Ford: We are back at a subject (SALT) we have gone over before. This is probably the most important decision I will have to make this term. With respect to both the long-term and short-term interests of this country, a good SALT agreement is extremely important. We should try to seek as much unanimity as possible. I have read and re-read the options and studied the variety of alternatives. For the meeting today, I would like you to give me the best possible condensation and listing of alternatives so that I can make a decision. Bill (Colby), will you start with a summary of intelligence.

Director Colby: (Note: The charts used by Director Colby are attached at Tab A.) Mr. President, at your last NSC meeting on SALT, in December, I reviewed some of our key conclusions about trends in Soviet forces for intercontinental conflict, particularly as they might be affected by a SALT II agreement. As we again approach the problem of negotiating with the Soviets, I would like to remind you of the way they are likely to view the quantitative relationship of strategic forces.

We have been unable to deduce this view with precision, for the Soviets consider many factors in assessing the strategic balance, but we do know from their writings, deployments, and some of their SALT positions that they view strategic forces as comprising both systems designed for peripheral attack and those for intercontinental attack.

In that context, these charts illustrate how they might expect the quantitative balance to appear now and in 1980 if the SALT II understanding is codified. If there is no SALT II agreement, we would expect Soviet force levels to be somewhat higher than shown here in 1980 and 1985.

President Ford: Somewhat higher?

Director Colby: Somewhat higher, if they are not limited, if there is no SALT II.

President Ford: How do you estimate what we would do?

Director Colby: We use our programmed forces.

We have not shown 1985 figures for the Soviets since there are too many uncertainties in trying to estimate that far out.

The Western forces shown include the intercontinental strike forces of the U.S. and, in dashed lines, the nuclear bombers and missiles of our European allies as well as our forward based nuclear systems -- all of which the Soviets have insisted contribute to the strategic balance. They also include a numerically small threat from China (which we have not shown here).

The charts also show Soviet medium bombers, MRBMs, and IRBMs in dashed lines. We know that the Soviets include these systems in their own evaluation of the overall balance, although they have resisted their inclusion in SALT.

The 1980 chart illustrates that in our best SALT-limited estimate, the present modernization and MIRV programs will considerably expand the number of Soviet weapons -- warheads and bombs -- in spite of a relatively stable number of delivery vehicles -- ICBMs, SLCMs, and bombers.

The Backfire is shown separately on this chart. We believe that at Vladivostok the Soviets agreed to limit intercontinental systems to equal aggregate levels without including either Backfire or FBS in those levels.

President Ford: By 1980 they will add around 200 Backfires?

Director Colby: The Backfire production by 1980 will be around 140 for their long-range aviation forces, and 140 for naval aviation.

The comparative number of weapons is evidently an important strategic measure to the Soviets. As you see, they now have fewer weapons than the U.S. and could, therefore, view their current conversion and deployment programs in part as rectifying this imbalance.

Other quantitative measures are also important to the Soviets:

-- The Soviets currently lead the U.S. in equivalent megatonnage (and in missile throw weight, not shown here), which the character of their chosen weapon systems indicates they value higher. We project that, with their current programs, their advantages in these respects will continue to grow.

-- The Soviets also consider the capability of their forces to survive and to attack various target sets under various scenarios. Thus, these boards provide only an indication of how they might view the balance, rather than a definitive treatment of the outcome of a strategic exchange.

As I indicated at the last NSC meeting, SALT II limitations would hold down the gross numbers of Soviet delivery vehicles to some extent and would limit the more extreme possibilities for growth in numbers of Soviet weapons. They would not change other asymmetries in the forces of the two sides, such as megatons and missile throw weight, or reduce the qualitative improvements in Soviet forces which we expect.

Finally, Mr. President, I would note that the Soviets view these issues against the overall Soviet-U.S. relationship. We believe that the following factors are prominent in Brezhnev's current negotiating perspective:

-- His view that the Soviets have already moved further than the U.S. in SALT negotiations by agreeing at Vladivostok to equal aggregates without forward-based systems and by subsequently promising to meet U.S. requirements on MIRV counting rules;

-- Second, his probable feeling that the U.S. is displaying a degree of ambivalence about its role in the world that makes it unnecessary for the USSR to concede more than the U.S. on remaining SALT II issues; and

-- Last, the likelihood that the USSR's own foreign policy and economic setbacks, an imminent Party Congress, and Brezhnev's diminished vigor all combine to make it seem unwise for him to try to accommodate maximum U.S. demands on Backfire and cruise missiles.

President Ford: Thank you, Bill. Are there any questions?

Dr. Ikle: Do your force charts include cruise missiles?

Director Colby: No.

General Brown: I would be interested in the details of how you computed megatonnage. We computed megatonnage for 1985, and at a hasty glance, I believe it is quite different from Bill's. I won't discuss it further,

but my silence does not imply agreement. Colby's numbers show an insignificant contribution from the Backfire. Ours show that in 1985, with about 500 Backfire, the Backfire contributes about 30-40 percent of the total force megatonnage.

President Ford: What percent?

General Brown: 30-40 percent of the megatonnage.

Secretary Kissinger: That assumes it is all for use against the U.S. It does not take into account the cruise missiles or FBS factors.

General Brown: I'm speaking of it only in terms of percentage of the Soviet force.

Director Colby: In 1980 they will have produced around 270 Backfires. By 1985 they will have 550 Backfire. Therefore, if you double the number of Backfire, you double the megatonnage shown here.

Secretary Rumsfeld: But that would not be near 30 to 40 percent.

General Brown: Our people should get together and look at this.

Brent Scowcroft: If you loaded the Soviet forces with Badgers, you would come out about the same, but there is no worry about the Badger.

General Brown: This relates to Secretary Kissinger's concern (expressed at the recent SIOP briefing) about holding forces in reserve. [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

General Brown: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

General Brown: [redacted]

President Ford: Is there a question about the Badgers?

General Brown: Not with me.

President Ford: Are they comparable with the Backfire?

General Brown: They are not the same percentage of the force as Backfire.

President Ford: This is a startling chart; I am surprised I have not seen it before.

General Brown: There are two factors. First, we have drawn up a revised Backfire production estimate -- from 300 to 500. Second, the first time the information was shown in this form was this week. The Backfire megatonnage is now up to 40 percent for 1985. Bill Colby's chart shows the percentage only for 1980.

President Ford: The chart shows that the U.S. has only slightly better than 50 percent of the Soviet megatonnage. Even that bar in 1980 is significant.

Director Colby: We will get together with the JCS and DIA and come up with 1985 figures for Backfire.

President Ford: I would like to see what you come up with.

Dr. Ikle: There are so many ways to cover megatonnage.

Director Colby: This chart for 1976 includes approximately 580 medium bombers in the European threat. It leaves out about 2000 fighter/bomber types not currently configured for nuclear weapons.

Secretary Rumsfeld: What about U.S. FBS?

Director Colby: U.S. FBS include 770 odd systems approximately, including those in the Pacific. There are about 1000 additional U.S. and NATO weapons not configured for nuclear weapons.

President Ford: Henry, would you proceed with your briefing.

Secretary Kissinger: I would like to sum up the options prepared by the VP. These are summarized on the chart, and are self-explanatory. The chart shows four options categories. You can put together different variations once the basic principle is decided -- the principle you want to follow.

For each of the options, one must ask three questions.

First, is the option compatible with the national interest, in the national interest? This depends on its strategic impact, not just its negotiability. We have done detailed analyses on each of the options, far more detailed than simply counting megatonnage.

Second, one must ask what the situation would be in the absence of an agreement. How do you count Backfire megatonnage if there is no agreement? What are the specific countermeasures?

Third, you must ask if the option is negotiable. This goes back to Bill Colby's point -- what is the negotiating position as the Soviets see our relative forces?

I agree with Bill (Colby) that the Soviets have made all the concessions in this round. There have been no U.S. concessions except to play with the numbers. The Soviets took FBS out at Vladivostok. They are using our counting rules, which give us some 120 SS-18s or 2000 warheads for nothing. Every SS-18 is counted as a MIRV, and every one deployed to date has not been MIRVed.

The Soviet position is that Backfire should not be counted; that all missiles with greater than 600 kilometer range on heavy bombers should be counted; and that all missiles with greater than 600 kilometer range on other platforms should be banned. Therefore, every one of our options requests a Soviet change. Thus, it is not correct to put forth an option simply to see how they will respond.

Ambassador Johnson: The Soviets want to permit land-based cruise missiles up to 5500 kilometer range.

Secretary Kissinger: Right, but the change we ask is in our favor.

We must ask whether an option is salable. Given the discussions the past two years in this country, we may have a hell of a time selling it. Mr. President, you must take this into account.

In addition, you (President Ford) will have to decide by what method we should negotiate. We can take one leap to our final position, or we can have a series of fallbacks leading to our final position.

My instinct is that in Geneva you take small steps. But in Moscow with Brezhnev you give him something he can put to the Politburo. Therefore, our position should be as close to our final position as we can make it.

I would now like to discuss the options. Some of these we can use as fallbacks but some we cannot.

For Option I, the basic proposal is to codify Vladivostok. We would defer the Backfire and cruise missile negotiations until an agreed later date. In the future, they could run free, or if they would agree to build no more than a certain number of Backfire, we would build no more than a certain number of cruise missiles.

President Ford: How far along are we in codification of Vladivostok as Henry defines it.

Ambassador Johnson: We are quite far down the road.

Secretary Kissinger: In my judgment, deferral is almost certain not to be accepted by the Soviets, at least not initially. It implies Backfire will be counted. Since the counting rules are linked to resolution of the cruise missile issue, there would be no throw weight limit until the cruise missile issue is settled.

It is conveivable that if we go through other options and fail, then we might arrive at a version of deferral when we are at the end of the line. But we would end up without the counting rule; we would then have to rely on national technical means for MIRV verification.

We might have a chance of Option I at the last stage of negotiations, but without a throw weight limit and without the counting rule.

Secretary Rumsfeld: This depends on agreement by a date certain.

Secretary Kissinger: But both Backfire and cruise missiles could run free until 1985. It depends on how the negotiations go. Until November 1979 we could say we would not deploy beyond a certain number of

cruise missiles if they do not go beyond a certain number of Backfires. We could say July 1, 1979. The problem is what do we do on July 1, 1979 if there is no agreement. Either the basic agreement lapses or we go into cruise missile deployment.

President Ford: There would be no constraints on their cruise missile program either. They couldn't deploy them but they could do R&D.

Secretary Kissinger: This would make a tough decision in 1977. The agreement would lapse in 1979, or continue to 1985 with cruise missiles running free.

Secretary Rumsfeld: If they say they have given up on FBS as being out of SALT II, the Backfire can be given up too.

Secretary Kissinger: We can take the same position with the Backfire as they do with FBS. We can treat it in SALT III, not SALT II.

Ambassador Johnson: I agree with Don's point -- that they may not come back without also saying that we need to include FBS in the follow-on negotiations.

Secretary Kissinger: This option is unlikely to be accepted; as an opening position it would probably be rejected. It should be viewed as an absolutely desperate last attempt -- at the end of the line. My instinct is that it would bring in FBS but would not result in the counting rule or throw weight limit. (There was a brief interruption of the meeting at this time as a note was brought to the President informing him of the death of Chou En Lai.)

Secretary Kissinger: My recommendation is that we try any of the other options as a first step and then surface Option I. If we first try Option I and it is turned down we have no place to go. We would have to go from simplicity to complexity.

My recommendation is that even if we want Option I we should take one of the others first for negotiating purposes.

Let's now look at Option IV. From the standpoint of salability here and our national interest this is probably the best.

Option IV would count Backfire in the aggregate. It would ban ALCMs on heavy bombers above 2500 kilometers. It would count heavy bombers with ALCMs above 600 kilometers in the MIRV limit. It would ban ALCMs above 600 kilometers on other aircraft. It would ban SLCMs on submarines above 600 kilometers. It would ban SLCMs on surface ships above 2500 kilometers. It would ban land-based cruise missiles above 2500 kilometers.

From the point of view of our strategic interests, and the throw weight considerations of General Brown, Option IV is the most manageable. The only significant concession that it makes is that it counts heavy bombers with ALCMs as MIRVs.

President Ford: ALCMs up to 2500 kilometers?

General Brown: Correct. But we would like long-range SLCMs on submarines, but this is not a hard point.

Secretary Kissinger: We would be giving up some Minuteman III or Poseidons for ALCMs. For the Soviets, they must count 500 Backfire in the 2400 aggregate. Already they must destroy 200 systems. Therefore, under this option they would have to destroy 700 of their existing missiles, or about 25 to 30% of their force.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Or modify some of their force.

Secretary Kissinger: How?

Secretary Rumsfeld: If they agree to Option IV they could get around destroying some of their force by modifying the Backfire so it is no longer a gray area system.

Secretary Kissinger: Once it is a bomber, they would have to redesign it completely.

Secretary Clements: No. General Rowny and I say the Russians could modify it -- clip its wings so to speak.

Secretary Kissinger: This means they would have to count the Backfire or redesign it. I don't know how you (General Brown) react to modifying your force. But nobody who has talked to the Soviets says there is any chance of counting the Backfire in the aggregate. I spoke to Gromyko

when we were considering hybrid systems. I asked him how many in the Politboro understand SALT. He said four. I knew he was exaggerating since he doesn't understand it himself. But they do understand the Backfire and it is clear they are not going to count the Backfire.

If we want to get Option I, a good way would be to start with Option IV.

Ambassador Johnson: I heartily agree.

Secretary Kissinger: The next option we will look at is Option II. I believe we are unanimous in saying that the Soviets probably will not accept it and that it is not salable in this country. It has no constraints on Backfire, and the only limit on cruise missiles is one which has already been rejected. It would be better to the Soviets than our last proposal with respect to Backfire, but worse with respect to cruise missiles. The Soviets won't accept it, and in the U.S. it would not sell.

President Ford: It is not salable here because of no constraints on Backfire?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. You would be vulnerable to the right because it has no constraints on Backfire; and vulnerable to the left because there are no constraints on cruise missiles. People will say this is a phony agreement and that it jeopardizes our national interest.

Let's look at Option III. It explicitly puts Backfire and surface ship SLCMs in a hybrid systems category -- weapons not designed for a primary strategic mission but capable of performing such missions. It includes a numerical limit on Backfire.

President Ford: Above the 2400 level?

Secretary Kissinger: Above 2400. It also has a comfortable limit on surface ships SLCMs; for example we might have 50 ships with 15 missiles each or about 750 cruise missiles. This would be a two to one ratio relative to the Backfire. Option III would involve a separate protocol to be reviewed at some date together with the whole hybrid systems problem. The rest of Option III's features are the same as Option IV.

In terms of negotiations, a more elegant way to approach it would be to give the Soviets a separate limit of 400 for Backfire, not 300, but reduce the aggregate from 2400 to 2300 thereby effectively counting an additional 100 Backfires.

General Brown: We talked about a separate limit of 300 Backfires, not 400.

Secretary Kissinger: This other approach would have a 400 limit, but by reducing the aggregate from 2400 to 2300 this gives a net separate limit of 300. Option III is probably negotiable. In terms of salability there is still the problem with the Backfire numbers. One argument against this option is the FBS argument.

Long-range ALCMs would be banned from Backfire because they could only be deployed on heavy bombers. Surface ships SLCMs with greater than 600 kilometer range would be prohibited for the Soviets but permitted for us. On hybrid systems, each side makes its selection at the beginning.

President Ford: If they have Backfire, then they would have no surface ship SLCMs?

Secretary Kissinger: Right. We did this with the ABM. Each side had the right to defend either a city or a missile site.

This option (Option III) is the most nearly negotiable.

Everyone is most comfortable with Option IV from the U.S. view. Some think that we should try Option IV, and when it is rejected, we should try a variation of Option III, if the Soviets would agree to limiting SS-18 deployment to a level of 100. At that point we can make a final decision whether to go to Option III. This approach lends itself to Geneva -- we could start hard with Option IV and let out a little at a time. But the Soviets may conclude that we want no agreement this year.

President Ford: Why does this include a ban on land-based cruise missiles over 2500 kilometers range? Was this called for by Vladivostok?

Secretary Kissinger: This would be the easiest feature to get. However, there is no agreement on limiting land-based cruise missiles to 2500 kilometers.

Dr. Ikle: We would want this if we could limit ALCMs at the same time.

Secretary Kissinger: But then we are into cruise missile negotiations.

General Brown: The key point is that the only lever on the Backfire is the cruise missile. If we give on cruise missiles, then we have no lever on Backfire.

Secretary Kissinger: We should also get a presentation on what the DOD/JCS plan is to counter the Backfire in the absence of an agreement.

Each option permits us to carry out almost all of our plans in the cruise missile field anyway -- only we would have to give up 200 Poseidon or Minuteman III missiles.

President Ford (to General Brown): If there is no agreement and Backfire runs free, and they have an estimated 400-500 Backfire, do we go into an air defense program?

General Brown: We would have to recommend that. This is why it is imperative to cap the Backfire.

President Ford: None of the SALT contingency proposals I have seen include initiation of an air defense program.

Secretary Rumsfeld: You haven't seen our proposal.

President Ford: I saw two from your predecessor. (Laughter)

General Brown: We disown those. (Laughter)

Secretary Kissinger: SALT does not obviate the need for air defenses. If Backfire constitutes 20% of the numbers and 40% of the throw weight and "is certainly a strategic weapon" and "is certainly going to be upgraded" then we will "certainly need air defense".

Dr. Ikle: We will have savings because of curtailment of the Soviet missile force.

General Brown: This points out one major imbalance: the Soviets have air defenses, but we do not. The bombers will do the job but they will

pay the price. If bombers are in a situation like Vietnam where conventional weapons are used, they will take a beating; but in a nuclear conflict the bombers will go in only once.

President Ford: My memory of the 1950s is that we wasted many hundreds of millions of dollars on BOMARC. Those of us who were for it were wrong.

General Brown: All of us were wrong on the basis of the threat.

President Ford: All our NIKES are gone; we would have to start from scratch -- not in terms of technology but in terms of hardware.

Secretary Kissinger: My basic point is that if we need air defense, we will need it in any case. My question is how do you offset Backfire megatonnage in a no-SALT environment.

Secretary Rumsfeld: You mean no Option I?

President Ford: No, nothing.

Secretary Kissinger: The Interim Agreement runs out in 1977. We must decide to extend it or let all run free.

Vice President Rockefeller (to Secretary Kissinger): Option III addresses the hybrid systems. Does this mean that the Russians could not have both the aircraft and the cruise missiles?

Secretary Kissinger: They could not have both Backfire and long-range cruise missiles on surface ships. Both sides can have ALCMs on heavy bombers but they would count. They could not have ALCMs on Backfire unless they would count them.

We would have cruise missiles on heavy bombers, cruise missiles on other aircraft provided the range is less than 600 kilometers, and cruise missiles on surface ships.

They would have no long-range cruise missiles on surface ships or Backfire.

Vice President Rockefeller: Is the 600 kilometer range longer than they have a capability for now?

Secretary Clements: It is about what they have now. The platforms would be counted in the MIRV total. Each B-52 bomber would count -- not each missile -- in the MIRV total.

Ambassador Johnson: Ship platforms would not be counted in the MIRV total.

Secretary Kissinger: One B-52 would count as one MIRV launcher no matter how many ALCMs each bomber carried. What would a B-52 carry -- 12 on each?

General Brown: 12 -- maybe up to 20.

This brings us back to air defenses. There is merit in addressing 2400 vehicles the Soviets can use to hit the U. S. We cannot by treaty defend against their missiles, but we would like to constrain the Backfire.

Secretary Rumsfeld: George, why is it important to constrain the Backfire?

General Brown: It will be useful in support of ratification. It would be justification for having the Backfire outside the game.

Secretary Kissinger: Option III and Option II contain certain collateral constraints on the Backfire. There are additional benefits, but not decisive.

Secretary Rumsfeld: We have fallen into the habit of addressing selling it at home. It is worth elaborating all the points. The first question is the strategic implications. Also, we must know how to communicate the meaning to others. This is broader than Congressional ratification. We need to debate the effect on our country, our allies, and neutrals in the world. Developing arguments against Options I, II, III, and IV, and preparing answers to these arguments, is a useful process. Option IV has been explained. Option I has been explained. All of us have set aside Option II.

With respect to Option III, its positive elements are it has separate limits, some constraints on Backfire, and may be negotiable.

The problems with Option III are, first, that you have broken the 2400 level and gone up to 2700 vehicles, instead of reducing the level. There

is another problem. We are counting the Bison in the total, but here we have a new aircraft (the Backfire) with about the same range but we are not counting it -- yet it is comparable.

President Ford: How many Bisons are being counted in the 2400 ceiling agreed at Vladivostok?

Ambassador Johnson: We have no idea. We are counting 120 Bisons and Bears. But we have no indication from them what they are counting.

Secretary Kissinger: They will probably get rid of 180 Bisons just to get down to the 2400 ceiling, and the tanker force.

President Ford: Are the tankers interchangeable?

Secretary Rumsfeld: Yes.

General Brown: The same tanker can service either the Bison or the Backfire.

Ambassador Johnson: They have only 50 tankers.

President Ford: How many tankers do they need to get the Backfire to the U.S.?

General Brown: 50 tankers are adequate to get them here, and out of the country, although not necessarily back to the Soviet Union. Since they have no air defenses to penetrate, they have a tremendous plus.

Secretary Kissinger: What can offset the Backfire is our FBS. Also, they can have no ALCMs on Backfire and we can have a force of surface SLCMs in some ratio to Backfire.

Secretary Rumsfeld: I agree that we must use this as an offset, but carefully.

President Ford: What kind of surface ships? Navy men-of-way? Merchant ships?

General Brown: Not merchant ships.

President Ford: Do we have to build different kinds of ships?

General Brown: Existing ships will do. We can replace existing guns and missiles.

President Ford: Can you go down as far as destroyers?

Secretary Clements: Destroyers and even frigates can carry cruise missiles.

Ambassador Johnson: Would these have a strategic or tactical capability?

Secretary Clements: A tactical role, a regional mission like in the Mediterranean.

Secretary Kissinger: You could reach Kiev easily from the Mediterranean with the ranges you are talking about.

Dr. Ikle: You can have some assurances on the modes of operations.

President Ford: Would you be able to identify the ships carrying cruise missiles?

Director Colby: You could identify the ships with national technical means.

President Ford: And we could verify surface ships with SLCMs.

Director Colby: We can and with their means they can also.

Ambassador Johnson: You can see the launchers on the deck.

General Brown: This is the only aspect of cruise missiles that is verifiable.

Secretary Rumsfeld: There are two other thoughts that need to be discussed.

First, there is the marketing or public discussion of any agreement. Here we must consider a complex versus a simple agreement. There is a general feeling among all I have talked to that the extent to which we can make it simple, the better. It is better in terms of verification, the SCC, explaining it to the Congress, and explaining it to the public and our allies. Simplicity is one of the advantages of Vladivostok.

Inevitably, with Options II, III, or IV, Jackson will come down hard on us just like he did with me at my confirmation hearings. He will want to know about verification of cruise missiles, about distinguishing between nuclear and conventional-armed cruise missiles.

President Ford: That is a Soviet problem.

Brent Scowcroft: The problem is theirs, not ours.

Secretary Rumsfeld: That is an answer to it. That is one answer.

Secretary Clements: There is one major problem which makes all other problems insignificant. That would be raising the ceiling above the 2400 level. The public applauded the 2400 ceiling agreed to at Vladivostok. If we break the ceiling, I am afraid all other matters will get lost in the charge that "you have raised the ceiling".

Secretary Kissinger: Option I raises the ceiling too. Backfire runs free.

Secretary Clements: Backfire runs free for now, but it is a matter that would continue to be negotiated.

Secretary Kissinger: The day the agreement goes into effect, the ceiling would be 2400 plus Backfire, which would be 175 by 1979.

Secretary Rumsfeld: But in 1976, the public would understand that we were proceeding with the negotiation on Backfire.

Brent Scowcroft: We could avoid the perception of breaking the 2400 ceiling by having a separate protocol -- not "SALT II" but we would say "separately the Soviets have agreed to continue to negotiate the Backfire."

Secretary Kissinger: SALT III starts in 1977 on negotiations on reductions. The only option which avoids breaking the 2400 ceiling is Option IV. Options I, II, and III increase the ceiling, if you count Backfire as a heavy bomber.

As Don said, Backfire is a hybrid system not designed for strategic strike. It does have additional capability which they could use in the event that they wanted to against the United States.

The same thing is true of cruise missiles. They would not be very good for use as strategic system since the Soviets can see them coming for five hours.

One must analyze these issues very carefully.

President Ford: If we equate publicly the surface ship SLCM with the Backfire would this be a problem? Should we treat them separately? Militarily, George, can you equate the SLCM with the Backfire?

General Brown: I have not thought about it.

President Ford: Can you give me a reasonable guess.

General Brown: Yes, I think you can equate them as a reasonable guess.

President Ford: Seems to make sense.

Dr. Ikle: Equating the cruise missile with the Backfire.

Brent Scowcroft: But not equating the ship with the Backfire.

Secretary Kissinger: Is there some ratio of Backfires to ships that makes sense? For example two?

General Brown: I worry about the defense of ships. The Soviets have a large number of submarines which make our ships very vulnerable. Therefore, I hesitate to equate these two forces.

Vice President Rockefeller: The American people think about freedom of the seas. They think we have freedom of the seas. I ask the CNO what would happen if there were a war in Europe. He said we would have to abandon Japan to keep the sea lines open to Europe, and that we would have to abandon Israel. The public would spend money to put cruise missiles on ships. They have a major potential in defense of freedom of the seas. Cruise missiles are our chance to balance our position on the seas.

President Ford: The Soviets have 400 Backfires. How many surface platforms will we need to balance them?

Dr. Ikle: There is an 80 to 1 difference in payload. If you multiply the number of cruise missiles on each ship by the number of ships you could look at this. If you have 80 cruise missiles on a ship (including reloadings), it would equal a Backfire.

Secretary Kissinger: We talk about Option III as though it is a concession to the Soviets, but for the Soviets it is a tremendous political decision. They would have to give us long-range surface ship SLCMs. We must remember that they have tied the counting rule to cruise missiles and the counting rule gives us 120 missiles free.

If we agree on Option III we can expect a 10 percent slip at the margin Option III is at the margin of what the Soviets can agree to.

If we say we can have 80 cruise missiles per ship and 80 ships the Soviets will say no. If we say we are going to have 15 cruise missiles per ship and 50 ships that might work.

The significant part is that they would not have any cruise missiles on their ships.

Secretary Rumsfeld: There is a big difference between Options III and IV. If we end up with Option III, we must be able to say that we tried initially to get the Backfire included.

Secretary Kissinger: We have made that attempt for two years.

President Ford: At Helsinki we made the attempt and they made a flat categorical turn down.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Assuming this is a religious matter with the Soviets, then there will be gray area systems. If one says it is a matter of theology and cannot include it, it will be a future problem also. What if, for example, we decided to call the B-1 a medium bomber.

Brent Scowcroft: We did this on FBS. We took a theological position.

Secretary Rumsfeld: The future gets cloudy if things do not fit nearly into theater or strategic category. We need some way to address gray areas as we go down the road. This sets a precedent.

Dr. Ikle: Option III helps move in that direction.

Secretary Rumsfeld: We need to look for something to hold up. They can say to their people that they have 2700 systems. What is there for us to hold up? We need a technique of handling these matters. We need to look at options on the side like Option G.

Dr. Ikle: The position we can take on Option III is to say that we have covered more systems than Vladivostok covered -- that we have avoided unlimited arms expansion.

President Ford (to General Brown): For Option III, can you militarily defend the ALCM ranges?

General Brown: We could.

President Ford: I'm talking about the Committee giving us a hard time.

General Brown: The ALCM ranges are adequate for penetration aids against the Soviets. With the ground missiles, we could cover all NATO targets from Germany and Turkey. We have looked at that.

President Ford: You can defend the limitations on ALCM and SLCM ranges?

General Brown: Yes, and the 600 km bottom range.

President Ford: For SLCMs?

General Brown: Yes. The only thing that would give the U.S. a problem -- and the Vice President identified this -- would be how it would affect our anti-ship role. But in the anti-ship role there is no need for nuclear warheads. This is one reason for the arguments on the definitional problem.

Secretary Kissinger: This would be an enormous disadvantage to us because we have a large surface fleet.

General Brown: They do too.

President Ford (to General Brown): Would your colleagues also be able to defend these limits?

General Brown: Yes sir.

Secretary Kissinger: It will make a difference if you say it does not apply to conventional cruise missiles.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Since SALT is nuclear.

Secretary Kissinger: Therefore no test ban makes any sense since they can test to any range and call them "conventional". Everybody agrees you can screw on another warhead in ten minutes. It would be the edge of absurdity if we go to the Hill and say "This does not apply to conventional cruise missiles." Therefore my argument on Backfire would no longer be good since they can put on conventional missiles. I can just imagine what Jackson will do to us.

General Brown: This is not a new point. If this were the only problem with verification of cruise missiles, I would remain quiet. But no element of cruise missiles can be verified.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Even on Option IV, we must be able to defend our position on cruise missiles.

Secretary Kissinger: If we try to sell this to the Soviets and say "conventional okay" --

General Brown: "As do you."

Secretary Kissinger: This let's cruise missiles run free.

General Brown: The same thing applies to range limits, if range limits can be violated.

Secretary Kissinger: We have some hope on range verification; we can see them test. I would not want to present this to the high levels of the Soviet government. If we want to do this we should let Alex do it in Geneva. We have no conventional ICBMs yet.

General Brown: But we have conventional bombers. We usedbombers in a conventional role in Vietnam.

Brent Scowcroft: But the B-52s count regardless.

General Brown: We may want to use the B-52 in some other role, but I can't conveive of using the ICBM as a conventional weapon.

Alex Johnson: We could say we can do anything we want to on the basis of the conventional definition. We don't want to get in that position.

Dr. Ikle: We could put conventional cruise missiles on ships.

President Ford (to General Brown): Militarily, if we ban conventional missiles above the limit, what harm would that do?

General Brown: It would hurt us primarily in the anti-shipping role. We can get cruise missiles with tens of feet accuracy. Therefore we can use high explosive warheads.

Secretary Clements: There is no question about that.

Secretary Kissinger: We could have a 2500 km limit on surface ship SLCMs.

Dr. Ikle: This would simply be diverting strategic weapons to conventional weapons -- as we have done with the B-52.

President Ford: On surface ships, we can have nuclear missiles to 2500 km, plus conventional to 2500 km?

General Response: Yes

Secretary Kissinger: I am not sure how we would handle this.

President Ford: George, your concern is with the ban on conventional cruise missiles at any range. What is the military handicap?

General Brown: It forecloses tactical non-nuclear use, which is possible given our accuracy predictions.

Secretary Clements: We can use cruise missiles from carriers or the 963. We can replace some aircraft missiles with cruise missiles. Therefore we can use them in a tactical, attack, or regional mission on the 963 or the strike cruiser, or even the frigate.

Brent Scowcroft: What about target acquisition? You could not acquire targets.

Secretary Clements: In some instances this would be difficult; in other instances it could be handled.

Secretary Kissinger: Now carrier air must go over the target.

Secretary Clements: Would these limits all apply to nuclear-armed missiles?

Secretary Kissinger: There are two ways we can handle this. We can accept the range restriction, then try to make the distinction -- but just try to sell this to Congressional Committees. Then Option III is ridiculous. You can call missiles conventional and this lets them run free.

General Brown: The missiles are all the same. You can test them, then put them in a submarine or on an aircraft. This makes a mockery of SALT. You can't verify them.

Dr. Ikle: The Soviets have other means of verification.

Vice President Rockefeller: How far behind us are the Soviets in cruise missiles -- a couple of years?

Director Colby: More than that.

Secretary Clements: Five years or more behind us.

Vice President Rockefeller: Our freedom of use in cruise missiles to defend the Navy is a powerful argument. But 2500 km is quite a distance. However, in general we should go to 5000 km.

General Brown: Ultimately, but that is conceptual only.

President Ford: If you had a 5000 km missile, why would you even need to have them on a ship then?

Secretary Kissinger: If you accept 5500 km for land-missiles, you can cover the whole ocean.

Director Colby: The Soviet basic strategy is retaliation. This is the basic strategy, whether the Backfire is included or not. In negotiations this is a hard point. The Soviets feel that they have yielded to us so far.

Secretary Kissinger: They think our Congress will not raise the budget. We have to think in terms of salability to the left and the right. We may not get cruise missiles.

Secretary Rumsfeld: How do we respond to Congress on verification of cruise missiles?

Director Colby: They are difficult to verify. There is almost no distinction between conventional and nuclear missiles.

President Ford: Then how do we know about those they have in development?

Director Colby: [redacted]

Dr. Ikle: There's a difference between missiles with 600 to 2500 km range, and those with 5500 km range. We will know if they have massive deployment of ships with SLCMs.

Director Colby: If they employ missiles in the thousands, we can begin to pick it up. However, if they deploy only a small number, it really does not make any difference.

Vice President Rockefeller: On balance, I believe Option III looks pretty good. I am for developing land-based cruise missiles.

President Ford: What about counting the 300-400 Backfires above the limit.

Vice President Rockefeller: That doesn't bother me. I want to protect the Navy.

President Ford: What did I do on the Navy appeals in the Budget?

Secretary Clements: You approved them.

President Ford: That takes the Navy pretty far out.

Vice President Rockefeller: We need cruise missiles for the Navy.

President Ford: If we accept this premise, then carriers are not worth a thing.

Secretary Rumsfeld: We need to consider the number of Navy ships.

President Ford: In terms of ship-to-ship capability, the Harpoon is operational.

Secretary Kissinger: There can be a large number of attack submarines with cruise missiles -- not a negligible weapon. It is a potent weapon. There is no law of nature that says you have to attack ships from a distance. At a distance it would take 5 hours for the cruise missile to get to its target. The submarines gain in invisibility.

General Brown: There are two points. We should not confuse current capability with future capability. Much is still far off in the future. Target acquisition is missing, although maybe eventually we can use satellites. My second point: stuffing missiles in submarines has its limits too. We don't know how to communicate with submarines unless they come up like surface ships.

President Ford: Then why can't we sell the Seafarer in Michigan? (Laughter)

General Brown: The communications problem is difficult.

President Ford: Nelson, what is your reaction to Option III?

Vice President Rockefeller: I believe it is a good compromise. It is impressive.

President Ford: Is there anything more to add?

Secretary Clements: One last thing. This would raise the limit to more than 2400 systems. This is a political aspect which only you can judge. My feeling is that this is important. The other aspects will simply get lost.

President Ford: What if there is no SALT agreement?

Secretary Kissinger: The only way to stay within the 2400 is to ask for Option IV.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Option I would do it.

Secretary Clements: I'd go to Option I.

Brent Scowcroft: Option I goes above the 2400 level.

Secretary Rumsfeld: If we go to Option I, it won't say we are above 2400.

Director Colby: This is true of Option II also.

Secretary Clements: Option I is perfectly honest and straightforward. We can say we can't get agreement and we are continuing to look at it.

Secretary Rumsfeld: With Option I we can anticipate agreement during this year or early next.

Vice President Rockefeller: I think the country is drifting to the left (?) at the moment.

President Ford: That is an understatement.

Vice President Rockefeller: If we have no agreement, we will have to ask for more money. There is little chance to get it. I like Option III.

Secretary Kissinger: I want the record to show that I agree with the Vice President. I did not talk to the Vice President about this.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Come on, Henry, you passed him a note. (Laughter)

Vice President Rockefeller: Congress won't allow us the money for cruise missiles.

President Ford: I think we would be in a better position to defend it if we had Option III.

Secretary Clements: I defer to you at this point.

Brent Scowcroft: Bill, what would change that would make this more negotiable in one or two years?

Secretary Clements: The Soviets are more concerned with our cruise missiles than we are with their Backfire. -- We want to get the President through the election.

President Ford: If we are not in in '76, those that would follow would get a less benefical settlement than what we would get.

General Brown: We should make a good college try for Option IV first, then Option III -- rather than start on the assumption that we can't get Backfire counted.

President Ford (to General Brown): Militarily, can you defend Option III?

General Brown: It is very difficult from the standpoint of the Backfire and the fact that it would increase the totals. But if we tried Option IV at first and failed -- and the best we can get is Option III -- I have a reasonable story to tell.

President Ford: If we can say we have surface SLCMs with 2500 km range, is this a fair trade-off for the military to defend.

General Brown: No, sir. But a sweetener would be to reduce their heavy missiles -- to bring the 309 missiles down to some lesser number.

Secretary Kissinger: It is conceivable that Brezhnev would write you a letter, Mr. President. He could say that even though 1320 MIRVed missiles is okay, he is planning only 180 SS-18s, thereby giving us 120 MIRVs. This is conceivable, but hard to get.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Henry, what would you say in trying to defend Option III? What would you say is offsetting the 300 Backfires?

Secretary Kissinger: If there is no agreement, all Backfires run free. You have to begin by saying what do you do without an agreement. How do you offset Backfire under a no-SALT condition? That is the first question. Then, you say that Backfire is for the peripheral role as are our FBS. So FBS offset the Backfire. We would also say they can have no long-range ALCMs on their Backfire. We had not featured Backfire before Vladivostok -- but if the Soviets had known this in Vladivostok, they would have wanted us to trade FBS for Backfire.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Don't their FBS offset our FBS?

Ambassador Johnson: No. Their FBS can't reach the United States.

Unknown Speaker: But they can reach NATO.

Secretary Kissinger: I will not go to Moscow as the guy who refused to accept Option IV, and then testify before the committees on my "pre-emptive concessions."

Secretary Rumsfeld: Henry, the deal is that the guy highest in the popularity polls has to take the heat. (Laughter)

President Ford: That's not me. (Laughter)

Secretary Kissinger: I have tried for six months to get Option IV. I have tried every conceivable variation to try to get Backfire counted. You, Mr. President, personally heard them reject this position. Option III is even worse than the one Schlesinger and I had which they have seen. We have tried Option IV. Therefore, if we want Option IV, send it to them through Alex or Dobrynin. It is a total waste of time to take up Option IV with Brezhnev. If we would rather delay SALT, then we should go with Option IV.

President Ford (to Ambassador Johnson): When do you go back to Geneva?

Ambassador Johnson: The 28th -- it is geared to Henry's trip. We had earlier said the 12th, but the Soviets have agreed to change it to the 28th to tie it to Henry's trip.

President Ford: Can I have photostats of the charts on the options?

Director Colby: Yes. We will get them to you right away.

Brent Scowcroft: If we first try Option IV, then this adds to the liability of Option III. Jackson will say that this (Option IV) is what we wanted, and we gave to the Soviets.

Secretary Kissinger: I want to make it clear that I am not sure the Soviets will even buy Option III. We have some things going for us: their Party Congress, and Angola -- Brezhnev can't afford a major failure and Angola simultaneously. Option III is going to be dicey.

President Ford: We have hashed and rehashed all the options. Let me think it over. (To Secretary Kissinger) When do you plan to leave, the 18th or the 17th?

Secretary Kissinger: I appealed to the Soviets yesterday. I wanted to be here for the State of the Union address. The Soviets accepted my appeal -- I will leave the night of the 19th.

President Ford: Is there anything to add? Thank you very much.