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President's Notes: Challenge!

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CHALLENGE!

Recent dramatic developments in the expansion of nuclear offensive capabilities by the Soviet Union indicate that a change in the international strategic balance may be imminent. The Russian deployment of large numbers of the giant SS-9 intercontinental ballistic missile, as reported by our Secretary of Defense, leads many U.S. strategists to believe that the "balance of terror" which now exists between the two countries may be in for some significant changes. The SS-9 is the largest ICBM in existence, capable of delivering a 20-25 megaton warhead. It is many times more powerful in nuclear yield than any comparable system in the U.S. strategic arsenal. By its sheer size alone, it is clear that this formidable weapon system has the capability to destroy hardened Minuteman missile sites which comprise the major portion, in numbers, of the American strategic deterrent.

With the addition of some 200 SS-9's over the past few years, the Soviets have achieved numerical parity in respect to our land-based ICBM force of Minuteman missiles. Secretary Laird has estimated that "before 1974," if their present rate of production continues, the Soviet Union could have 420-450 of the SS-9 behemoths, enough to neutralize 95 percent of our land-based ICBM's if used in a preemptive strike. While an attack on our Minuteman silos would still leave our Polaris force of 656 missiles, the majority of which are planned to carry the multiple, independently targetable, reentry vehicles (MIRV), and our intercontinental bomber force of 600 planes coupled



cannot be assured of the survivability of all of these forces, especially 5 years from now.

Our Polaris submarines now roam the oceans of the world virtually undetected, but the Secretary of Defense has stated that we cannot be assured this situation will continue to exist past the mid-1970's: "... we cannot preclude the possibility that the Soviet Union in the next few years may devise some weapon, technique or tactic which could critically increase the vulnerability of those submarines." However, detection of our ballistic missile submarines is one matter, targeting and destruction is quite another. The inherent mobility of our nuclear submarine fleet lends significantly to their invulnerability regardless of detection capabilities. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that in a preemptive strike a portion of our Polaris force could be neutralized.

Furthermore, an enlarged fleet of the Soviet Yankee-class ballistic missile submarines stationed off our shores, supplementing Russian ICBM's, could destroy a substantial part of our intercontinental bomber force.

Thus, the possibility of virtually complete annihilation of our land-based ICBM force, the loss of a substantial part of our SAC bombers, and partial neutralization of our Polaris force, when coupled with the capabilities of the

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Russian Galosh antiballistic missile system to protect against a limited attack, could cast serious doubt as to the second strike capability of the United States after a preemptive attack. As Secretary Laird has stated: "... it is entirely possible that the Soviet Union could achieve by the mid-1970's a capability to reduce, in a surprise attack, our surviving strategic offensive forces below the minimum level required for 'Assured Destruction,' and thus gravely weaken our deterrent."

With this situation in mind, adventurous Soviet planners and some future Kremlin leadership (as uninhibited as Khrushchev in 1962) might contemplate a first strike on the United States. Whether they would suggest such an irrational act is perhaps unlikely, but, at the very least, the Soviets might feel they could afford to be considerably more aggressive in the formulation and execution of their foreign policy, particularly from a nuclear blackmail viewpoint. It is doubtful that they will quickly forget the lessons in the politico/military relevance of naval superiority backed up by an overpowering nuclear force which were learned at the hands of the United States during the Cuban missile crisis. And so, it is imperative that we never permit the Soviet Union to seriously doubt the credibility of our second strike capability. If this situation is ever reached, doubt could spawn irrationality which could lead to miscalculation of tragic proportions. Here the credibility of our sea-based retaliatory capability, its relative survivability vis-a-vis land-based systems, could prevent this ever happening.

During the decade of the 1950's, and during the early 1960's, the United States possessed overwhelming strategic superiority relative to the U.S.S.R. During that time the Russians lagged in the development and deployment of strategic nuclear forces. They were in the position of reacting to U.S. pro-

policy. Following the Cuban missile crisis, the Russians moved dynamically and decisively to expand their strategic nuclear forces. The time when we could profess clear strategic superiority has now long passed.

The critical question today is: will the U.S.S.R. be content with the strategic parity they have recently attained, or are they proceeding to try to achieve this first strike capability, capitalizing on current trends and pressures to reduce defense expenditures in our country? Secretary Laird clearly is convinced that the U.S.S.R. could achieve a first strike capability before the mid-1970's unless the United States moves to counter this threat. However, a most important consideration is not only if they *could* achieve this capability, but if they *would*. The intent of Soviet policy must be analyzed and this question resolved if we are to react effectively to maintain the credibility of our deterrent, as the President recently made so clear in his State of the World Message. And here, as we all know, intentions can be variable and hard to identify—capabilities are finite and real!

In the face of these questionable intentions, there are various courses of action open to us. The first to come to mind is through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)—for which we are all hopeful but not optimistic, for good reason. Another is to just wait and see, to monitor their strategic expansion program in the coming months; and there are others. However, each consumes valuable, and what could be vital, time which the United States can ill afford to allow to pass unproductively, particularly in light of the clear possibility that the Soviets might be moving toward a first strike capability now.

Indeed, if the Soviets have made the decision to gain clear strategic superiority before 1974, the United States is in a difficult, if not critical, situation. And if this is so, our new strategic offensive/defensive programs now under

consideration might well not be completed in enough time to maintain the viability of our deterrent. The ABM system is scheduled for operational readiness in the mid-1970's. This may be too late. Addition of MIRV to Poseidon missiles will have a positive deterrent effect, but only if the invulnerability of the submarine can be maintained. But will this be enough? The time may be inadequate for the complete development of entirely new strategic weapon systems. If we are to respond to the potential Soviet challenge, it would seem that we must take existing systems and mold them into a more credible deterrent.

With technological advances in guidance systems over the past few years and others that are certain to come in the future, continued resort to systems which are fixed, i.e., tied to one location, would be illogical. The circular error probability (CEP) of a ballistic missile system 5 years from now will probably be so small as to assure a virtually direct hit on any fixed target. Even schemes that would locally expand the present Minuteman complexes on a variable launching site basis would be vulnerable.

The key to maintaining a deterrent force is full mobility. Even if a mobile target can be detected, the problems associated with targeting and, more particularly, assuring destruction are awesome, especially if the target is not confined to a preset path.

The advantages inherent in a weapon system which is sea-mobile rather than land-mobile are, I believe, significant. Speed of mobility on land and water are roughly comparable. However, the vastness of the world's oceans is many times that of the U.S. landmass. Just look at a globe! Thus, the task of detection becomes more difficult. Furthermore, ships are not confined to a system of roads or tracks; they are free to select any course. Both the concept of the railroad Minuteman and the truck-borne

Missile-X were thoroughly analyzed years ago and discarded for various reasons.

Whereas land is associated with centers of population, the sea is not. By sending our strategic forces to sea, we substantially reduce the risk of attack on our homeland and the concomitant immense loss of life involved.

Several alternatives which conform to the criteria of *mobility* and *separation* of retaliatory forces from our population have been proposed. The Underwater Long-Range Missile System (ULMS) adapts to these criteria most effectively. However, neither the missile nor the submarine have as yet been developed. It is unlikely that there is adequate time between now and 1974 to make this system operational. However, we must accord it the highest priority and move ahead rapidly with this system which offers the maximum survivability--one that would utilize the broad expanse of all the world's sea areas and be able to launch retaliatory missiles from ranges of 6,000-7,000 miles, and make its detection an almost impossible task for an aggressor.

For what may be an immediately emerging Soviet nuclear challenge, however, we may not be able to wait for ULMS; we would have to adapt existing weapon systems to fit the above criteria. The Ballistic Missile Ship (BMS) is one option which could provide an effective interim deterrent. The BMS concept proposes mating various of our existing missile systems to surface ships. Such a program would be relatively modest in cost. The transition could be carried out reasonably rapidly and efficiently, as no technological advances would be needed to move the missiles to new but similar launching tubes mounted aboard existing ships, merchant types as well as naval.

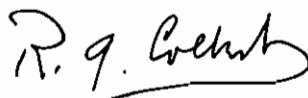
Admittedly, surface ships are more vulnerable to attack than submarines, but what is contemplated is not absolute survivability in terms of months or

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days. Everything in this regard is relative! What is needed to constitute a credible deterrent is merely the survivability of substantial numbers of retaliatory missile launching systems only for a period of hours. A sea-based deterrent force, which can survive for hours, surely would provide our national leaders with a wider range of options. Most importantly, it would make impossible any conclusion by the Kremlin that they have a positive first strike capability.

It seems imperative that while we await further indication of Soviet inten-

tions to move toward strategic superiority we not only expedite the Safeguard and UIMS systems, but also move ahead with the design and development of prototypes of the various other sea-based options in the event they may be needed. Time could be of the essence.



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