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PRIME MINISTER  

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Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

It is probable that the SALT II Agreement will be signed shortly at a Summit meeting between President Carter and President Brezhnev. This will be followed by a lengthy and controversial ratification debate in the United States Congress. The Government will need to take up a public position, both nationally and through the Alliance, soon after signature of the agreement. Separate advice will be submitted on the line we should take. Meanwhile I attach a background note which has been prepared by a small group of officials under Cabinet Office chairmanship on the content of the SALT II Agreement, and on the main issues which have arisen during the negotiations and are likely to affect our interests in SALT III.

2. Copies of this note are being given to the incoming Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence.

*J.H.* 4/5  
(John Hunt)

SECRET

STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS

The SALT II Agreement is virtually complete and is likely to be signed soon at a summit between Presidents Carter and Brezhnev, although no date has yet been fixed. Thereafter there will be pressure for early governmental reactions. European statements on SALT II will be scrutinised very closely in the United States and will have an important bearing on relations with the Carter Administration and on the ratification process. Advice will be submitted separately about the line which might be taken publicly by Her Majesty's Government.

Content of the Agreement

2. The main provisions of SALT II are summarised at Annex. SALT II is an advance on the 1972 Interim Agreement in several important ways. It covers all types of strategic nuclear delivery systems. It imposes equal ceilings within each category. It limits certain new systems both in number and in kind. It also makes more detailed provision for verification.

General Criteria

3. For the Alliance as a whole SALT II is likely to be assessed under four general criteria.

i. The East/West balance SALT II codifies the "essential equivalence" in strategic arms between the super powers. It does not assume exact equivalence: the Soviet Union will retain its advantages in heavy missiles, throw-weight and "deliverable megatonnage", while the United States will still have more warheads (except possibly for a short time in the middle of the treaty period), greater accuracy and a more balanced spread between land, sea and air systems. The agreement provides a framework of limitations within which each side can develop its own strategic posture and which does not in itself confer an overall strategic advantage on either side.

ii. NATO strategy The Alliance's deterrence strategy places four main requirements on SALT II: that strategic sufficiency should be maintained; that the Alliance's ability to maintain an adequate theatre nuclear capability should not be impaired; that there should

SECRET

continue to be credible linkage between strategic and theatre nuclear systems; and the continued effectiveness of the strategic and theatre nuclear elements of the deterrent triad, where survivability is one of the major considerations. In our judgement, these requirements are satisfied by the provisions of SALT II. But the United States Administration accept that they will need to improve their forces during the life of the treaty (see iii. below), and there are some special British and European interests which we shall wish to keep under review (see paragraph 4 below).

*Don't forget.*

iii. Future options The United States Administration consider that American strategic needs can be met fully within the SALT II framework. The agreement would allow the United States to develop and (after the Protocol expires at the end of 1981) to deploy a mobile ICBM to offset the problem of the vulnerability of its existing land-based missiles. It also permits the deployment of cruise missiles on aircraft with the proviso that those with a range greater than 600 km should be carried only on designated heavy bombers and should count against the agreed ceilings. The deployment, but not the testing and development, of ground and sea-launched cruise missiles with a range greater than 600 km is prohibited for the duration of the Protocol (this is especially relevant to the European Allies - see paragraph 4 below).

*Visit that - Protocol be not reviewed.*

iv. Arms control The SALT II cuts are modest: about 250 Soviet systems in all. But, in addition to tighter verification provisions, SALT II also bans certain new systems, limits the total number of MIRVs and restricts each side to one new ICBM. All of these constraints mean that the Soviet Union is able to undertake fewer strategic military programmes than would probably be the case in the absence of an agreement.

*No - they have got as much as they can do.*

Special British and European interests

4. In addition to these general criteria (which are of overriding importance to the United States as well as Europe) there are three issues of special concern to the Europeans. These have dominated our consultations with the United States on SALT II.

SECRET

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i. Transfers of systems and technology SALT II does not forbid the transfer to a third party of equipment or technology. But each side undertakes "not to circumvent the provisions of this agreement through any other State or States or any other manner". The United States will set out their interpretation of this clause in a unilateral statement after signature. This will state that the non-circumvention provision simply makes explicit the inherent obligation any State assumes when party to an international agreement and that it will not in practice interfere with continued United States nuclear co-operation with the Allies. In this connection we have sought and obtained confidential bilateral assurances from the Americans. In July 1977, they assured us that SALT II would not prevent the United States from meeting its obligations under the 1958 Defence Agreement and the 1963 Polaris Agreement; and that, under SALT II, new forms of United States assistance could be agreed in the future. <sup>when?</sup> In December 1978, the Americans clarified that the transfer of long range air-launched cruise missiles to the United Kingdom was not precluded in principle under SALT II. They have, understandably, emphasised throughout that any United Kingdom request for transfers would have to be dealt with in the light of circumstances at the time. These private assurances, although in theory not completely watertight, are substantial and should ensure that in practice the United States will be able to transfer systems and technology to meet our foreseeable needs. They have been reflected in a number of official public statements made in the United States (including one by President Carter on 20th February) that the agreement will permit the United States and the Allies to pursue all the defence programmes that may eventually be needed, including cruise missiles. There is one outstanding point on the proposed United States' public statement which has caused us difficulty and which we were trying to resolve in discussion with the Americans. A separate submission will be made on this.

iii.

ii. The Protocol Concern has been expressed that the United States will come under pressure to extend the Protocol limits on ground and sea-launched missiles and mobile ICBMs after 1981. The United States have, however, frequently assured us that the restrictions contained in the Protocol would lapse on its expiry.

SECRET

SECRET

Furthermore all the indications are that the United States takes seriously the freedom of choice which it will regain when the Protocol expires. It is spending over \$200 million on ground and sea-launched cruise missiles this year and has budgeted \$670 million for the development of a mobile ICBM next year. According to the State Department, any future limitation on these systems would require United States agreement and Congressional approval. Moreover, Alliance policy on long range theatre systems is being made (under active United States leadership) on the assumption that all types of cruise missile will be deployable from 1982 onwards.

iii. "Grey area" The Soviet Union has a growing advantage in the grey area between strategic systems covered by SALT II and battlefield nuclear systems. It is a source of concern for Western Europe, particularly the Federal Republic of Germany, that SALT II puts no limits on Soviet long range theatre systems, notably the SS20 missile and Backfire, which are targetted on Europe and are therefore strategic in European terms. They were excluded partly because they do not have a genuinely inter-continental range, but, more importantly, as a consequence of United States insistence which, with the support of the Alliance, has been maintained since SALT I, on excluding American theatre nuclear systems from the negotiations. It is expected that the Russians will press for such systems, together with British and French nuclear forces, to be included in SALT III. The Americans intend to state publicly that any future limitations on United States systems principally designed for theatre missions should be accompanied by appropriate limitations on Soviet theatre systems. Meanwhile a NATO Group of senior officials is studying what improvements are needed in NATO's long range theatre nuclear forces (TNF). The indications are that in its final report to Ministers in the autumn, the Group will recommend a mixture of cruise missiles (probably ground-launched) and a longer range

SECRET

version of the Pershing ballistic missile launcher. In parallel with this a Special Group is considering possible arms control options for limiting Soviet long range theatre systems. This Group will also report in the autumn. It is hoped that Ministers will thus have a wide framework within which to take timely decisions about TNF modernisation.

5. Although we judge that British and European concerns have so far been adequately safeguarded in the SALT process, our interests will increasingly be at issue as future negotiations focus on deeper cuts and possibly on grey area systems. There will be a need for close consultation in the Alliance and for a clearer view of where our interests lie. We hope that the two NATO Groups referred to above will provide the basis for a stronger and more coherent European input.

#### The United States Ratification Debate

6. It is at present far from certain that President Carter will secure the two-thirds Senate majority needed to ratify SALT II. The position of the United States Administration would become even more difficult if, as seems increasingly likely, the issue becomes entangled with the 1980 Presidential elections. Much of the debate addresses technical questions such as verifiability, ICBM silo vulnerability and whether the United States can afford to allow the Soviet Union to retain the advantages that it has (eg in heavy missiles, throw weight and deliverable megatonnage). But it also coincides with a painful realisation that the United States has lost strategic superiority and must work hard to maintain parity with the Soviet Union during the 1980s. As a result, SALT II is being blamed for problems which have other causes and the issue is broadening into a critique of United States defence policy and of detente in general. But the signs are that the ratification debate, far from inducing complacency, is serving to alert the United States to the need for fresh efforts to preserve strategic stability.

#### Assessment

7. SALT II is a compromise which covers only a facet, albeit an important one, of East-West competition. It is ideal for neither side. For the West, its main limitations are that, while confirming a rough

SECRET

equivalence in strategic systems, it will not change the existing and growing imbalance in long range theatre nuclear systems; that it sets a precedent for restraining one of the West's most promising answers to this problem - the cruise missile; and that it has only limited effect on the advances which the Soviet Union has made since SALT I in strategic programmes.

8. These problems would however not disappear if SALT II was rejected; some could be made worse. Rejection would, moreover, set back the process of arms control and would undermine the possibility of restraining Soviet theatre nuclear forces in the foreseeable future. It would rupture the consensus on strategic matters which has served the United States and the Alliance well over the last three decades, and would damage the credibility of United States' leadership. Moreover it would adversely affect the whole conduct of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. It will therefore be very important that the Alliance is seen to give solid support to the Americans over SALT II. In any case there are positive advantages for the West in the new agreement. It will be seen to be compatible with Alliance strategy. It will largely preserve our own and the Alliance's nuclear options. It will help to reduce the vulnerability of United States ICBM silos. It should provide a useful, if by no means infallible, constraint on Soviet behaviour, especially in the post-Brezhnev era. Finally, it will avoid an all-out competition between the super powers in strategic systems.

*Doubtful*

*I am less concerned - but  
will do nothing to say  
nothing to undermine the  
authority of the President.*

May 1979

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*AM*

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## SALT II: THE BROAD OUTLINES

The Shape of the Agreement

1. The SALT II Agreement consists of three parts:
  - (a) A Treaty lasting until 31 December 1985.
  - (b) A Protocol expiring on 31 December 1981, which will cover a number of issues not included in the Treaty.
  - (c) A Joint Statement of Principles on subsequent SAL negotiations.
  
2. There are also a number of associated documents or statements including:
  - (a) An agreed exchange of statements on the Backfire bomber.
  - (b) A unilateral American interpretative statement on non-circumvention.
  - (c) A unilateral American statement on Theatre systems.

The Treaty

3. The SALT II Treaty is based on the 1974 Vladivostock Accord. The central feature is the ceiling agreed for the total number of strategic nuclear delivery systems both sides may possess, and sub-ceilings for different elements within that aggregate, as follows:



SECRET

MIRVed ICBM launchers	820
MIRVed ICBM launchers <u>plus</u> SLBM launchers	1,200
MIRVed ICBM and SLBM launchers <u>plus</u> aircraft carrying long- range cruise missiles	1,320
All strategic systems	2,250

4. The Treaty contains a large number of detailed provisions associated with these ceilings. In particular:

(a) an agreed timetable of reductions to reach the overall aggregate by 31 December 1981.

About 250 Soviet systems will be dismantled.

The Americans are already below the ceilings.

(b) provisions limiting fractionation

(ie the number of separate Re-entry Vehicles (RVs) which may be fitted to any one missile). The maximum number of RVs on existing missiles is frozen at existing levels. For new ICBMs, up to 10 RVs are permitted. For new SLBMs the figure is 14.

(c) provisions permitting the testing and deployment of ALCMs capable of ranges in excess of 600 km only on aircraft counted under the sub-ceiling for MIRVed systems. This restraint applies both to conventional and nuclear-armed ALCMs.

(d) provisions to aid verification, which, as with SALT I, will be carried out by "national technical means". These include exchange of data, advance notification of missile tests, and the prohibition of the encoding of radio signals transmitted from missiles under test ("telemetry encryption").

This scope of this prohibition remains one of the important unresolved issues.

SECRET

5. The Treaty also prohibits the flight testing and deployment of new types of ICBMs, with the exception of one light ICBM for each side (MIRVed or non-MIRVed). There are no limitations on new types of SLBMs.

6. There are restrictions on the modification of existing types of ICBM and SLBM although the details remain a key unresolved issue.

7. The Treaty also prohibits additional fixed launchers of heavy ICBMs as well as the development, testing and deployment of mobile launchers of heavy ICBMs, of heavy SLBMs and their launchers, and of heavy ASBMs.

8. The non-circumvention provision states:-

"In order to ensure the viability and effectiveness of this Agreement each party undertakes not to circumvent the provisions of this Agreement through any other State or States or in any other manner."

There is also a requirement not to assume international obligations in conflict with the Treaty.

The Protocol

9. The central feature is the limitation on Ground and Sea launched Cruise Missiles and mobile ICBMs.

(a) The deployment of conventional and nuclear-armed Cruise Missiles with a range over 600 km on sea-based (SLCMs) or land-based (GLCMs) launchers is prohibited. Testing and development are permitted.

(b) Testing and deployment of light ICBMs from mobile launchers banned. The testing of mobile light ICBM launchers themselves is permitted.

The Joint Statement of Principles

10. This statement contains four agreed principles governing the approach to be adopted towards future negotiations.

(a) a commitment to continue to negotiate to limit strategic arms further in number and in kind.

(b) a reference to the need to strengthen verification and the Standing Consultative Commission in the interests of strengthening compliance with the Treaty.

(c) three specific objectives for future negotiations:

(i) substantial reductions in the number of strategic arms;

(ii) qualitative limitations on strategic arms, including restrictions on the development, testing and deployment of new types of strategic arms, as well as the modernisation of existing strategic arms;

(iii) the resolution of issues included in the protocol.

(d) agreement to consider further measures to enhance strategic stability, including a provision that "each party will be free to raise any issue relative to the further limitation of strategic arms".

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SECRET

Exchange of Statements on Backfire

11. The Americans have accepted that the Soviet Backfire bomber will not count in the overall limitations on strategic systems but they are looking for assurances on this aircraft outside the formal Treaty. The Russians have indicated that they will provide a unilateral statement giving assurances that they would freeze their current Backfire production rate at "approximately 30" per year and not upgrade the aircraft so as to give it a capability against the United States. The Americans want the production rate to be stipulated precisely at 30 per year and assurances that there will be no significant upgrading of the aircraft's capability.

Unilateral American Interpretative Statement on Non-Circumvention

12. The Americans intend to issue an interpretative statement on non-circumvention for the North Atlantic Council and for Congress. We are still discussing the US draft bilaterally. No draft has yet been considered by the Alliance.

Unilateral American Statement on Theatre Systems

13. The American unilateral statement is designed to reinforce their position on future negotiations. It states that:-

"Any future limitations on US systems principally designed for theatre missions should be accompanied by appropriate limitations on Soviet theatre systems."

SECRET