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DEDIP

PERSONAL

FM WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 2768

OF 302200Z OCTOBER

INFO PRIORITY MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO, MODUK

MOSCOW AND UKDEL NATO (PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADORS)
MOD UK (FOR PS/SOFS, DUS(P), ACDS (POL-NUC), DACU)
MY TELNO 2703: POST-REYKJAVIK ARMS CONTROL DISCUSSIONS
SUMMARY

1. UNSATISFACTORY DISCUSSION WITH POINDEXTER

DETAIL

2. I HAD AN HOUR WITH POINDEXTER ON 28 OCTOBER, AND TOOK HIM THROUGH ALL THE ARGUMENTS IN YOUR TELNO 1822.
3. POINDEXTER MAINTAINED FIRST THAT HE PERSONALLY HAD BEEN VERY IMPRESSED BY AKHROMEYEV AT REYKJAVIK. THEY HAD HAD A LONG TALK ON THE FIRST MORNING OF THE SUMMIT, FROM WHICH POINDEXTER HAD DRAWN THE CONCLUSION THAT THE RUSSIANS GENUINELY WANTED REDUCTIONS IN NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES, AND A PERIOD OF STABILITY. IN POINDEXTER'S VIEW THIS REFLECTED ECONOMIC PRESSURES. OF COURSE IF THE SOVIET REGIME HAD TO FIND THE MONEY FOR CONTINUED REARMAMENT, THEY WOULD FIND IT; BUT IT SEEMED THAT THEY WOULD PREFER NOT TO DO SO. MANPOWER WAS ALSO A PROBLEM, FOR DEMOGRAPHIC REASONS. POINDEXTER'S CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE SOVIET INTEREST IN ARMS CONTROL WAS GENUINE.
4. THE PRESIDENT'S INTEREST WAS OF COURSE EQUALLY GENUINE. AND NO-ONE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED AT THE REYKJAVIK EVIDENCE OF HIS WISH TO ELIMINATE BALLISTIC MISSILES. THE ORIGINAL MARCH 1983 RATIONALE FOR SDI HAD BEEN TO RENDER BALLISTIC MISSILES OBSOLETE. BUT THE US WAS NOT PROPOSING THE ELIMINATION OF ALL STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WEAPONS: BOMBERS AND CRUISE MISSILES SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN DETERRENCE, AND THE JCS HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED TO UNDERTAKE A NEW STUDY EXPLORING JUST THAT. THE JCS HAD OF COURSE AGREED IN JULY TO THE INCLUSION IN THE PRESIDENT'S 25 JULY MESSAGE OF THE REFERENCE TO ELIMINATING BALLISTIC MISSILES, AN IDEA FIRST PROPOSED BY WEINBERGER IN JUNE, BUT NEITHER THEN NOR SINCE HAD THERE BEEN A FULL JCS STUDY ON THE LINES NOW COMMISSIONED. THE 10 YEAR TIMESPAN WAS OF COURSE NEW.
5. POINDEXTER DUCKED MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEED TO MAKE RECTIFYING THE CONVENTIONAL AND CHEMICAL IMBALANCES A CONDITION FOR ABOLISHING BALLISTIC MISSILES. HE ARGUED THAT ABOLITION WOULD OF ITSELF GREATLY REDUCE THE SOVIET CW THREAT, AND PARTIALLY REDUCE THE SOVIET CONVENTIONAL PROPONDERANCE, FOR BALLISTIC MISSILES OF ALL RANGES, WITH CONVENTIONAL AND CHEMICAL AS WELL AS NUCLEAR

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WARHEADS, WOULD GO. SECONDLY, THE US WAS NOT PROPOSING THE ELIMINATION OF AIR-BREATHING NUCLEAR DELIVERY SYSTEMS OR NUCLEAR ARTILLERY. THIRDLY, THE US WOULD ONLY AGREE NOW TO ELIMINATE BALLISTIC MISSILES IF THE RUSSIANS HAD CORRESPONDINGLY AGREED THAT THE US WOULD BE FREE TO DEPLOY SDI AFTER THE 10 YEAR PERIOD ENVISAGED FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. WHEN I QUERIED WHETHER ABOLITION OF BALLISTIC MISSILES WOULD EVEN THEN SEEM PRUDENT UNLESS THE US WERE CERTAIN THAT SDI WOULD PROVIDE A COMPLETE DEFENCE, POINDEXTER PRODUCED THE SHULTZ QUOTE INSURANCE POLICY UNQUOTE ARGUMENT, IE THAT, WITH US/SOVIET BALLISTIC MISSILES ABOLISHED, THE REQUIREMENTS FOR STRATEGIC DEFENSE AGAINST THIRD PARTIES/TERRORISTS/SOVIET CHEATING WOULD BE VERY MUCH LOWER THAN THE PRESENT SDI REQUIREMENT. HE MAINTAINED THAT IT WAS ALREADY VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT SDI WOULD PRODUCE ENOUGH TO MEET THAT LOWER REQUIREMENT.

6. I LEFT POINDEXTER IN NO DOUBT THAT WE SAW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONVENTIONAL BALANCE AS THE KEY, AND THAT WE WISHED TO BE FULLY CONSULTED ABOUT NEW US THINKING. BUT HIS ANSWER WAS NO MORE THAN THE MECHANISTIC ONE THAT THE JCS HAD STARTED THEIR NEW ANALYSIS. THEY WOULD BE ASSESSING THE PRESENT RELATIVE STRENGTH, AND LIKELY FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, OF SOVIET AIR DEFENCE (WHERE THE RUSSIANS CERTAINLY HAD THE WORLD'S MOST SOPHISTICATED SYSTEMS) AND US STRATEGIC NON-BALLISTIC OFFENSIVE PROGRAMMES (WHERE STEALTH TECHNOLOGY UNDOUBTEDLY PUT THE US FAR AHEAD). THEIR CONCLUSIONS WOULD CERTAINLY BE VERY IMPORTANT.

COMMENT

7. THIS WAS AN UNSATISFACTORY DISCUSSION. I FOUND POINDEXTER EVASIVE, OFFERING COUNTER-ARGUMENTS WHICH SEEMED CONFUSED, AND ON OCCASION CONTRADICTORY.

8. SEE MIFT FOR A REVIEW OF THE MAIN POINTS BEING PUT TO US BY ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS ABOUT THE ABOLITION PROPOSAL.

ACLAND
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