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The Alternative To SALT II

Defense Secretary Harold Brown is urging the Senate to ratify the SALT II Treaty despite the almost 4-to-1 advantage it gives to the Soviets in land-based ICBM warheads because, he says, without SALT II, the Soviets can build an even greater superiority in ICBMs. His speculation as to how many more weapons the Soviets might build sets up a strawman in the SALT II debate.

Nobody can offer any reason for why the Soviets might want to build more strategic weapons than the fantastic superiority in numbers, in throw-weight, and in megatonnage, which they are permitted under the terms of SALT II. There simply are not that many more targets in the world.

Under SALT II, the Soviets are clearly permitted enough weapons to destroy the United States as a viable nation if they choose to use that power and risk our retaliation. Under SALT II, the Soviets would also have the power to carry out nuclear blackmail over the flow of imported oil, and over the deployment to Cuba of combat troops, bombers, offensive missiles, and missile-firing submarines.

As far as Soviet capabilities go, there is little if any difference between what they might do with or without SALT II. But there is a tremendous difference between U.S. capabilities with or without SALT II, and therein lies the rub.

If SALT II is ratified, the United States will never be permitted to catch up with the Soviets in numbers of ICBMs, heavy missiles, types of advanced-model ICBMs, throw-weight, megatonnage, numbers of land-based ICBM warheads, numbers of advanced supersonic strategic bombers, or anti-ballistic missile launchers. We will be prevented from building any mobile missiles until 1982, and from building cruise missiles with a range long enough to reach Soviet territory.

If SALT II is rejected, on the other hand, we will be able to seize control of our own destiny and build whatever is necessary for the national defense of our nation. Here is a check list of steps we need to take for the survival of America,

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and which we can take if SALT II is rejected, but would be forbidden to take if the Senate ratifies the Treaty.

1. Start immediate production of the B-1 bomber. SALT II would prevent this, because the Treaty would force us to scrap an ICBM for every B-1 built, which would be foolish. Without SALT II, we can build all the bombers we need. If the Soviets can build 30 Backfires a year, we can build 60 B-1s a year.

2. Reopen production lines for the Minuteman III. Deploy the missiles as mobile missiles or, alternatively, install them in Minuteman I silos and immediately transfer the Minuteman Is to mobile launching pads. This would be prohibited by SALT II because it does not permit us to catch up with the larger number of Soviet missile launchers.

3. Proceed immediately and rapidly with development and deployment of the MX mobile missile, and deploy it variously on railroad cars and trucks. This would make effective use of one of our great American assets: our far-flung and efficient transportation system. This can be our counterbalance to the Soviet capability of hiding their mobile missiles in their enormous land mass protected by the tight security of their closed society. The Soviets had the capability and the legal right under SALT I to build and hide 2,000 mobile missiles; no one knows how many they now have.

4. Develop, test, and deploy the cruise missile in ranges that can reach the Soviet Union from our delivery vehicles. This is prohibited by the SALT II Treaty.

5. Go into immediate and rapid production of the Trident submarine and submarine-launched missiles. If the Soviets can build eight such submarines a year, we can build 16. The Soviets already have 27 Trident-class submarines. At our present snail's pace of production, we will have only one in 1981.

6. Withdraw from the SALT I ABM Treaty in accord with Article 15 which permits either country to do that when "extraordinary events related to the subject-matter of this Treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests." Certainly the staggering momentum of Soviet weapons buildup and their steady substitution of heavy missiles for lighter missiles jeopardize our supreme interests.

It is obvious that we would be a thousand times better off if SALT were rejected than if it were ratified. If fact, the difference is between survival and suicide.

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