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ACDA-4649

Meeting of the General Advisory Committee

Thursday, January 21, 1971  
Operations Center, Department of State

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Subject: ICBM Survivability

U.S. ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY  
Declass/Release ( ) in whole (  ) in part  
by F. Smith Date 7-2-96

Witnesses:

- Dr. Jacob B. Gilstein, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Research and Development) for Ballistic Missile Defense; and Director, U. S. Army Advanced Ballistic Missile Defense Agency
- Mr. Julian Davidson, Director, Huntsville office, U. S. Army Advanced Ballistic Missile Defense Agency
- Lt. General Alfred D. Starbird, USA, Manager, U. S. Army Safeguard System
- Dr. Richard L. Garwin, Physicist, Columbia University
- Colonel Archie L. Wood, USAF, Assistant for SALT to Dr. Gardiner Tucker, ASD/SA
- Commander James J. Martin, Jr., USN, Director, Strategic Retaliatory Division, OASD/SA
- Mr. James R. Schlesinger, Assistant Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President
- Mr. Philip J. Farley, Deputy Director, ACDA

Written Submissions:

Charts Used in Mr. Davidson's Presentation (Annex A)

The Committee Questions:

- On Hard-point Defense for Messrs. Gilstein and Davidson (Annex B)
- On ICBM Survivability for Colonel Wood and Commander Martin (originally prepared for Dr. Gardiner Tucker) (Annex C)
- On ICBM Vulnerability for Mr. Schlesinger (Annex D)
- On ICBM Vulnerability for Mr. Farley (Annex E)

Committee Members Present:

- Mr. John J. McCloy, Chairman
- Dr. Harold Brown
- Mr. William J. Casey
- Mr. William C. Foster
- Mr. Kermit Gordon
- Dr. James R. Killian
- Dr. Jack Ruina
- Governor William Scranton
- Dr. John Archibald Wheeler

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Committee Staff Present:

- Mr. Thomas W. Fina
- Mr. George J. Jaeger
- Mr. Richard Gookin

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Others Present:

Mr. Gerard Smith, Director, ACDA  
Mr. Howard Furnas, Special Advisor to the Chairman

Stenotypists:

Mr. Arnold A. Cohn  
Mrs. Wylma H. James  
Mr. Wendell H. Thiers

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survivability. These two systems are so different that they are very difficult to compare. But I think our confidence is much higher in the survivability of the SSBN's.

DR. BROWN: Because we can predict it better. The Soviet confidence in their ability to destroy the bombers before they get off is probably not much higher than their confidence of their ability to destroy the submarines. But our confidence that they won't be able to is much less.

I think that really is the distinction.

MR. GORDON: Colonel, I've been puzzled whether, in your judgment, there is a plausible scenario for a Soviet first strike against both the MINUTEMAN and the bombers. I'm all mixed up on this timing question.

COLONEL WOOD: Yes.

MR. GORDON: Could you talk about that for a minute?

COLONEL WOOD: Yes; right.

Vulnerability -- let's start from a slightly different point -- and, Jim, I may ask you for some help on this timing question -- let's start from a slightly different

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point. If the Minuteman force and the bomber force were thought to be vulnerable to a first strike by the Soviets, and in the event of a crisis, those two forces could provide an incentive to the Soviets to attempt a first strike. So that's a situation in which such a thing might occur. And that's one of the things, incidentally, to be quite concerned about -- a force which has less than adequate survivability characteristics, pre-launch survivability characteristics.

Jim, why don't you take the timing question -- the relationship of the attack against the ICBM's and the bombers -- and talk about that timing question just a little bit?

CMDR. MARTIN: The way the argument usually goes, in most things it's a question of confidence, but the way the argument usually goes is as follows: Picture yourself as a Soviet planner who wants to destroy both Minuteman and the bombers. Assume you got effective weapons against each. It's oversimplified if you have two bases. The coordination of our launch and ICBM --

DR. BROWN: Leave together; arrive together?

CMDR. MARTIN: That's basically it. Now, if they leave together -- well, let me take the other case: If they

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arrive together.

DR. BROWN: To launch the ICBM's...

CMDR. MARTIN: The ICBM's will provide at least 20 minutes of warning -- more than that -- to get their bombers off. So alert bombers are flush and satisfactory, and they only got half of what they set out to do.

Now, if they leave together, then the SLBM's will get to the bomber base first.

DR. BROWN: But they risk launch on warning of their ICBM's.

CMDR. MARTIN: There's about 20 minutes in there when the President might decide to launch on warning.

Now, that's probably more of a launch on warning case for the Soviets because the information on which the President would act would not only be detection of the Soviet ICBM's on our radar surveillance but hundreds of nuclear weapons on the bomber bases.

DR. BROWN: Well, you know, some theorists would claim that that's not any proof of a counter-population attack on the United States. But to a country that had experienced something like that, I'm not sure the distinction would be an obvious one.

DR. RUINA: Well, they get into all kinds of detailed

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arguments on what you do in such situations.

And we've gone through, I think, some of these scenarios.

But if all our forces were taken, except the submarine forces, would you take them -- excepting suicide; that kind, you know?

DR. BROWN: Well, I think what you can say is the Soviets would then be risking a response with Minuteman -- in other words, they would not have destroyed Minuteman. If the President decided then not to launch them, they might subsequently be destroyed; but that's not their option any more. That's a U. S. option which they would have to figure out the likelihood of.

There is, however, the separate question of pinwheeling, which is often raised. And I don't know where it stands this year. It's about four years old. I'm not sure whether it's been resolved. It's the idea of launching SLBM's simultaneously at the bomber bases and at the area above Minuteman -- which doesn't destroy Minuteman but prevents you from launching it until the ICBM's arrive with and destroy.

CMDR. MARTIN: Well, I've seen a very recent analysis which presumes our hardening of Minuteman II has

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been completed and Minuteman I is on the floor. So all of our Minuteman forces are relatively hardened against that effect -- about one SLBM per squadron rather than one over the entire Continental United States -- and to pin Minuteman down, a high-confidence pindown of Minuteman under those circumstances takes maybe 20 or 25 boatloads of SLBM's for that purpose only.

DR. RUINA: Wouldn't you need an IR warning to get bombers off anyway?

DR. BROWN: No. We're talking about simultaneous launching of SLBM's against the bomber bases and to keep the Minuteman pinned down.

DR. RUINA: How much time? It's at least 10 minutes.

DR. BROWN: But in that case you don't have to worry about the question of simultaneous destruction of the bombers and missiles. We're talking now just about the case which says, "Well, the bombers are somewhat at risk, maybe not very much," in an attempt to prove that not only are the bombers at risk but that the missiles can simultaneously be at risk.

COLONEL WOOD: My original hypothesis was that the

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