



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

31 July 61

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: MIRV Testing

Both the Air Force and the Navy are scheduled to carry out full flight testing of MIRV's beginning in August. I believe that a strong case can be made for postponing full flight testing until the end of the calendar year. For this purpose, full flight testing would be defined as follows: 1) maneuvering once out of the trajectory plane and release of more than one RV, or 2) maneuvering out of the trajectory more than once. Provided that we carry on other testing, the Air Force and the Navy both indicate that they can continue to maintain the current IOC. DDR&E (Dr. Wilson) concurs in this judgment. The budgetary cost to the Air Force would be \$5-\$10 million; there would be no added cost to the Navy.

As you know, the current Strategic Talks proposal which we are examining does not contain any limitation on MIRV's. However, it is very likely that the Soviets will raise the MIRV question and the studies done by Systems Analysis and the Services suggest that there would be some advantages to us in banning MIRV's, and some problems as well. Once MIRV's are tested, there would be no way to ban them short of very intrusive kinds of on-site inspection. Whether a ban on MIRV tests could be verified solely by national means is a matter of some dispute. The recent SNIE concludes, essentially, that they could, but many people in this building doubt that conclusion. Our ability to monitor MIRV flight testing could be improved by agreed supplementary procedures involving, for example, banning of missile tests except in certain designated areas. We are planning to ask the Intelligence Community a series of questions about verifying MIRV testing.

The considerations which lead me to the conclusion that we should postpone full MIRV testing, given that it could be done without changing the IOC, are as follows:

1. It would leave open the option of agreeing to a ban on MIRV tests should we decide that such an agreement is in our interest. We could accept such an agreement with or without agreed inspection, depending upon the results of our analysis.

2. Flight testing of MIRV's just before the opening of the Strategic Talks might force the Russians to take a very propangandistic position despite the evidence that we now have that they are taking these Talks very seriously.

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E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.4

By *[signature]*, NARA, Date *5/30/04*

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3. There would be some adverse reaction, both in the U.S. and in the rest of the world if the U.S. seems to be testing a major new system on the eve of Strategic Talks with the Soviet Union aimed at a halt in the strategic arms race. Whatever flight test program is approved, I believe it should be carried out with no publicity regarding the testing of a new system. Rather, the test should be described as part of our continuing program to improve the ability of our missiles to penetrate possible Soviet defenses.

In view of the difficulties in distinguishing MIRV tests from other tests, I recommend that you sign the attached memorandum asking the Secretaries of the Navy and Air Force to work with DDR&E, PA and ISA to develop a test program for the next six months which would bar only complete MIRV flight tests as defined.

Both the White House Staff and State (Chip Bohlen) have expressed interest in our planned MIRV series and have asked to be informed about what we decide to do. I believe that you should inform the President and that we should be authorized to inform the State Department of your decision in regard to MIRV testing.

SA (Dr. Selin) concurs in the recommendation. ODDR&E (Dr. Wilson), while noting that the schedule could be held with the constraints imposed, objects to the delays on the grounds that "we could negotiate from a stronger position after these tests and that we should minimize delays and their attendant cost increase." PA (Mr. Fryklund) takes no position on the desirability of postponing the tests, but notes that there will be wide press coverage whatever we do, and that if we test MIRV's this will be widely reported whatever press guidelines are developed.

Enclosure  
a/s

*Dr. Halperin / gm*