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DATE: April 14, 1983
TIME: 11:07 a.m.
PLACE: Cabinet Room

SUBJECT: NSC Meeting on Strategic Forces Modernization (S)

PARTICIPANTS:

The President

The Vice President
Admiral Daniel P. Murphy

State
Secretary George P. Shultz
Jonathan Howe

Defense
Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger

OMB
Dr. Alton Keel

CIA
Director William J. Casey

JCS
General John W. Vessey, Jr.

ACDA
Dr. James George
Ambassador Edward Rowny

OSTP
Dr. George Keyworth

White House
Edwin Meese
James Baker
Michael Deaver
Judge William P. Clark
Robert C. McFarlane
Richard Darman

NSC
Thomas C. Reed
Gen. Horace L. Russell
Col. Michael O. Wheeler

Minutes

Judge Clark opened the meeting by commenting that the President's Commission on Strategic Forces findings and recommendations were briefed to the President on April 11 and that Defense's Strategic Forces Technical Assessment was completed on March 31. He then stated that Secretary Weinberger met with the Commission several times and his staff provided administrative support. Judge Clark then asked Secretary Weinberger to present views to be followed by views from General Vessey.

Secretary Weinberger made the points that the MX problem has been with us a long time and two previous administrations before this one had recommended basing modes prior to the October 1, 1981 recommendation. He then indicated that with the rejection of the

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October 1 recommendation, the Congress directed another basing mode be presented no later than December 1, 1982. This led to the CSB recommendation which was also rejected. He then stated that he accepted the Commission's recommendations enthusiastically. Weinberger followed his endorsement with a brief review of the Commission's recommendations to continue all of the ongoing strategic programs, place MX in Minuteman silos, initiate a small missile program, proceed with hardness and fratricide research, conduct BMD research and pursue ambitious arms control. He then stated that the new small missile be approached with caution, that it must be proved feasible, and the better part of valor is to proceed with the hardness work. He further suggested to the President that he accept the recommendations and note that the elements are not inconsistent with the President's recommendation of October 1981.

General Vessey commented that the report was consistent with the Joint Chiefs of Staff's recommendations to place MX in Minuteman silos which was briefed to the President on February 11. He emphasized that to quibble with details was not worthwhile, but the arms control impact for the small missile must be resolved. Vessey then stated the President should proceed with the recommendations by the Commission.

Judge Clark asked for other views.

Thomas Reed apologized for Brent Scowcroft's absence and indicated he was substituting for Scowcroft to present the views from the Commission. He then stated that Congressional views are positive and there has been no terrible explosion or objection to the Commission's report.

Dr. Keyworth followed with the comment that Brent Scowcroft and Tom Reed had done a good job and he agreed with Secretary Weinberger and General Vessey.

Secretary Shultz stated that he also agreed with the Secretary and Chairman, and that evident ability to implement these recommendations is a key component to START talks and INF. He then expressed his view that the Commission's report was a very good report. Shultz also indicated the report raised, in terms of the small missile, an implicit violation of SALT II, but that research and development is permitted and deployment would be long after SALT II expires - thus, no problem. He then concluded that as we move along in START, we should think about the 850 number, but there is no reason to rush into this.

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Director Casey stated that it was evident that Soviets are going ahead with the small missile and it is essential we get on with a small missile.

Ambassador Rowny commented that he agreed to everything he heard and supports the report. He further stated that when we get ready to develop a mobile missile, it should be verifiable to provide leverage for dealing with the Soviets on this issue.

Dr. George stated that he supported the report and the arms control part was workable.

Secretary Shultz commented that this is the time to get behind the report and get the MX deployed and the small missile going.

Mr. Meese then indicated the Commission and Joint Chiefs of Staff should be commended for their close planning, coordination, and talking to each other.

General Vessey highlighted as an issue putting MX in vulnerable silos and indicated this will take a little bit of political flack. He also indicated that we must face up to the criticism that we are moving to a launch-under-attack policy.

The President stated the Commission had done a great job; they put aside their diversity to come together, and now the support must be uniform for this. He then emphasized that small differences must be set aside and we must do everything we can to refute the critics.

The President closed the meeting by stressing that he was grateful to all and now is the time to move forward.

Postscript: (On April 19, 1983 the President reported to Congress and publicly announced his endorsement of the recommendations by his Commission on Strategic Forces and urged prompt Congressional action and support.)

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

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