MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Recommended Long Range Nuclear Delivery Forces 1963-1967 (C)

I have reviewed the 27 September draft on the subject above which is proposed as Appendix I to the draft 6 October memorandum for the President which you forwarded for comment and recommendations.

Your remarks regarding the proposed appendix, including those made at your meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 October, have indicated your desire for detailed comment on the entirety of the Appendix. Attached are comments provided by the Chief of Staff responsive to that desire.

Your forwarding memorandum asked for recommendations or changes considered to be absolutely essential. I cannot urge too strongly that you reconsider the decisions on basic national defense strategy inherent in the proposed force selections, before the Memorandum and Appendix I are submitted to the President.

These decisions reject the U.S. strategic offensive strengths required for a credible option to pre-empt a general war. This rejection is by choice, not through necessity.

The Appendix itself indicates, in language consonant with both existing and proposed basic national security policy, why forces giving us a pre-emption option cannot be rejected.

a. Page 5, particularly in its last paragraph, makes it clear that we cannot accept the dangers of the "minimum deterrence" route. That course would forfeit our option to respond with nuclear attack against the Soviets in case of assault against our Allies, or in other circumstances demanding our response, and would remove the deterrent to such assault and other enemy challenges.

b. We cannot preserve this option while rejecting a first strike capability. The use of the word "full" distorts the real meaning and importance of a "first strike capability". This is not a question of preventive war, nor should we be seeking a "full" first strike capability.
as defined in the Appendix. It is unlikely that we shall ever again be
in a position to pre-empt without expecting damage which would be sub-
stantial or severe, depending upon the definition of those terms. I am
convinced, however, that we must retain a credible first-strike option
one which would permit us to respond with unacceptable consequences to
the enemy while holding damage to the United States and its Allies to
levels which would be 'acceptable in light of alternatives and the issues
at Stake.'

9. In your meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 16 October, you
pointed out the dangers of over-estimating the enemy threat. You observed
that such over-estimation could lead to invalid conclusions on our ability
to achieve a first-strike option. As they have been described to me, your
remarks indicated both your awareness of our critical need for a first-
strike option and your disagreement with the belief that it is "almost
certainly infeasible" as suggested in the proposed Appendix I.

I agree that the force recommended in Appendix I is based clearly
upon the strategy which that Appendix sets forth, and therefore denies
us a credible first-strike capability. I believe that a U.S. first-
strike option is demanded by our basic national security policy and our
commitments to NATO and other Free World Alliances. Moreover, I believe
that we cannot work on the theory that it is not attainable. The forces
which the Air Force has recommended are addressed to the objective of a
flexible and selective deterrent posture which will include a first-
strike option.

a. I do not agree with the judgment in the Appendix that the dif-
ference is not worth the cost. We are talking of a difference which
amounts at most to some three to four percent of the five year Defense
budget. That difference may well determine whether we advance or retreat
in the cold war, whether we can use general purpose forces effectively to
cope with limited war threats, and whether we can hold our alliances to-
gether while continuing to deter general war through the ability to defeat
the enemy if deterrence should fail.

b. In this regard, I note that while the analysis in the Appendix
uses a number of varied assumptions, it is limited to the single basic
adverse extreme of an attack initiated by the Soviets, well planned and
well executed with limited warning while U.S. forces are in a normal
peacetime alert posture. The exclusion of other cases from the assess-
ment tends to obscure the strategic advantages and heightened military
worth which are inherent in higher U.S. force levels under reasonable and
less adverse circumstances.
Trends in estimates of the enemy nuclear threat, and particularly the recent downward revision in the estimates of enemy ICBM strengths, have a major bearing upon the decisions we make in the coming months. The Soviets may be forced to mark time while they are attempting to perfect more manageable follow-on missiles for operational deployment. The time is favorable for our attainment of significant superiority. The same choices which will make such superiority possible will also insure that we retain the option to increase our force goals still further if future circumstances and Soviet actions should make our current assumptions optimistic, and to do so while retaining an adequate margin of advantage rather than attempting to accelerate to overcome a dangerous disadvantage.

I recommend, therefore, that the force procurement proposals in the Memorandum for the President, and its Appendix I, be changed to the levels recommended in the 23 October Department of the Air Force Fiscal Year 1963 Budget Estimate, and that the text be revised to reflect the strategy to which those forces are addressed.

Eugene H. Zuckert

Attachment

CC: Deputy Sec Def
1. The following are comments on Appendix I, subject as above, to a proposed memorandum from the Secretary of Defense for the President on the Fiscal Year 1963 Department of Defense Budget. Sections II and III of the draft Appendix are treated first, followed by Section I since the latter is a summary of force recommendations and fiscal implications based upon the later Sections.

SECTION II

2. STRATEGY

a. The Appendix proposes a strategy based upon "the capability, in the event of Soviet nuclear attack, first, to strike back against Soviet bomber bases, missile sites, and other installations associated with long-range nuclear forces, in order to reduce Soviet power and limit the damage which can be done to us by vulnerable Soviet follow-on forces, while, second, holding in protected reserve forces capable of destroying the Soviet Urban society, if necessary, in a controlled and deliberate way."

b. At the same time, however, in rejecting the dangers of "minimum deterrence", the Appendix recognizes the need for the capability to respond with nuclear attack against the Soviets in case of attack against our Allies, in order to deter or defeat such attack. This capability (page 4, para II b) is consonant both with existing and proposed Basic National Security Policy, and with Sections VI a (1) and VI b of the 16 October 1961 Secretary of Defense draft of National Targeting and Attack Policy. It requires a credible U.S. option to "strike-first" in response to Soviet attack against our Allies.

c. It is inconsistent with this essential element of our strategy, adopted by the Appendix, for the text to postulate and define a "full" first-strike capability, and then reject that capability as the sole and unattainable alternative to "minimum deterrence" and "second-strike-only" postures.
"First-strike" capability has a number of meanings. It can be used to describe unprovoked or preventive war. It can be defined as in the Appendix, to mean a capability to respond to unacceptable threat or provocation by pre-emptive attack while avoiding severe damage in return. These are not the points at issue, however. U.S. basic national security policy demands that we have the option to respond with nuclear attack upon the Soviets if circumstances, such as assault upon our Allies or some other grave challenge, demand. This critical requirement is not altered by the fact that in the face of a powerful enemy possessing nuclear weapons, it is unlikely that we will escape serious --- or even "severe" --- damage in any general war even under less than the most adverse circumstances. What the U.S. requires, then, is not the "full" first-strike capability which is defined into virtual unattainability by the Appendix. We require a credible first-strike option; one which will permit us to respond to intolerable provocation or imminent threat of attack with unacceptable consequences to the enemy, while holding damage to the U.S. to levels which (although perhaps "severe") would be acceptable in light of the alternatives open to us and the issues at stake. We cannot reject such a credible first-strike capability.

4. The reasons given on page 5 for rejection of a U.S. option to strike first cannot be supported.

(1) Whether a credible first-strike option is or is not "almost certainly infeasible" as stated on page 5 will depend not only upon the size and capability of the U.S. force, but upon how we use that force, and the size and nature of the opposing enemy force. There is a degree of inconsistency between concluding on page 5 that possible deficiencies in our ability to destroy the enemy nuclear threat will make U.S. pre-emption infeasible, while stating on page 4 that the strategic concept envisions that we would hold in secure reserve a sizeable portion of our forces earmarked for possible later attack against Soviet urban society. Granted, in capabilities plans, we must make provision for strategic reserves to the extent permitted by the size of our force relative to the task. In programming our strike effort, we must insure our uninterrupted retention of decisive military superiority. Recovered and reconstituted manned strike systems will form a portion of this capability. In objectives planning for future force levels, however, we should not plan toward a basic deficiency in our ability to perform the first priority counter-military task, while professing the intention to implement a strategy which would permit us to withhold a sizeable portion of our force for contingent urban attack. Whether we are considering U.S. pre-emption or retaliation, and regardless of whether or not we assume our cities will be attacked, we should not plan toward a situation in which we would hold forces in secure reserve as a threat against enemy cities, or actually employ them in attacks against enemy.
cities, while the balance of forces were inadequate in size to
insure the maximum possible destruction of the enemy military
capability for further nuclear attacks upon the U.S. and its
Allies. This means that even if a "withholding" strategy were
otherwise feasible in light of the collocation of military
strengths and urban areas, we cannot reasonably profess to be
planning toward the objective of extending deterrence against
urban attack beyond H-Hour unless we plan to build a force of suff
sufficient size to do the most effective counter-military job
possible, with enough left over to pose a threat against targets
in urban areas. Such a force, properly programmed, would make
a credible U.S. first-strike capability feasible.

(2) Regarding the effect of enemy future force size
(page 5, para a) on the feasibility of achieving a U.S. capa-
bility for first-strike pre-emption, the estimates used in the
Appendix appear to be at odds with views stated by the Secretary
of Defense as late as 16 October 1981. In his meeting with the
Joint Chiefs of Staff on that date, the Secretary of Defense
emphasized the dangers of over-estimation, in that it could lead
to invalid conclusions regarding the feasibility of a U.S. first-
strike option. As will be discussed further below, the Secretary
expressed disagreement with estimates such as those employed in
this Appendix. While it is agreed that future enemy strengths,
especially in the ICBM category, are subject to uncertainties,
it is also believed that revisions in National Intelligence
Estimates since the Appendix was drafted further detract from
the validity of the conclusion that achievement of a first-
strike capability "is almost certainly infeasible".

(3) It is not certain that the Soviets would consider
that future continuance of the U.S. strategic superiority which
has prevailed for the past decade would put them in an intolerable
position (page 5, para b), or that even if this were assumed to
be true, that they would be provoked into an arms race in the
field of strategic offensive capability. In light of the
sizeable superiority in the capacity of the U.S. and its Allies,
a demonstrated U.S. determination to retain a clear and decisive
margin of relative strategic advantage might have precisely the
opposite effect upon Soviet strategic choices. On the other
hand, U.S. and Allied strategic force trends which would hold
out to the Soviets the prospect of their possible achievement
of decisive superiority might constitute the strongest form of
inducement to Soviet acceleration and expansion of their nuclear
strike strengths.

(4) The suggestion that we cannot provide required
strategic forces except at the cost of resources needed to
strengthen our theatre forces is also inapplicable. An
adequate strategic posture is the only means whereby increased
theatre capability has any credibility.
3. TARGETING

a. The last paragraph on page 5 and all of page 6 discuss the target system for U.S. strategic attack. While the general magnitude of the task will not be treated, it is questioned whether the aiming point list shown would represent the best investment of our strike effort.

b. Page 5 states that the target system used was derived from June 1961 studies by the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (NESSC). In Phase I, DOD Project 12, the NESSC developed four target systems. The one used here relates to the most restricted one developed, with the single exception of the NESSC "Urban" system which consisted of only 120 urban complexes plus defenses. The NESSC study did not specifically identify Ground Zeros (GZ's) in Communist China and the Satellites, but made a percentage allowance for them in calculating weapon and force requirements. Except for possible defense suppression, the Appendix omits Communist China and the Satellites and makes no allowance for the force required to attack them.

c. The military command and control system which will direct the employment of Soviet nuclear strike forces is not included in the aiming point list used in the Appendix. The effectiveness of an initial Soviet attack and their ability to reconstitute and employ their residual forces for further attack will depend upon their capability for uninterrupted command and control. Failure to program forces adequate to provide the capability to direct this element of enemy strength could have a seriously adverse impact upon our ability to reduce damage to the U.S. and its Allies. The omission of air and missile support and logistics strength directly associated with enemy long-range nuclear strike forces could have a similarly dangerous effect.

d. The targeting concept in the Appendix would withhold forces for attack against Soviet urban society. The basic strategic inconsistency involved was discussed above. However, the Appendix also provides that if and when such forces were released for attacks, they would proceed to destroy enemy urban floorspace and population. We would presumably release these forces when and if the enemy attacked our cities. At that point in time, the problem would still be to get the greatest possible worth from our follow-on attack, with a view to our maximum advantage at war termination and beyond. Killing enemy population and collapsing urban floorspace may not constitute
the greatest worth. Once we release any secure reserve we may have held, then irrespective of the threat which it may have implied, its attack objectives may have to be the same as for our initial strike forces, i.e., the enemy military threat perhaps including some strengths newly discovered during or since our initial attacks. To the extent permitted by that priority, our follow-on forces should execute selective and discriminating attacks as necessary against critical elements of enemy industry and technology which directly sustain the enemy war effort, rather than indiscriminate "counter population and urban floorspace" attacks.

e. The third paragraph on page 6 states that enemy ICBM sites are most economically attacked intercontinentally. In the near term, past delays in authorization for development of U.S. MIRMs leave us no alternative to attack contributions against enemy ICBMs by strategic strike forces based external to the theatres. However, in the face of rapid growth in the enemy ICBM threat, NATO will not long exist without suitable countering weapons of its own. A land based predominantly mobile NATO MIRBM force would be both cheaper and more effective. The same observation applies to U.S. MIRBM deployments to Alaska and the Far East to counter an enemy ICBM threat to those areas.

4. THE SUPPORTING ANALYSIS

a. Pages 7 through 10, with the Appendix and the tables on pages 18 through 20, constitute the analysis upon which the decisions on force levels are based.

b. The supporting analysis is limited to several variations in assumptions, but all under the basic case of a war that begins with U.S. forces in a normal peacetime alert posture, with a well-planned Soviet attack, well executed with limited warning. The reason stated (page 7, second paragraph) for examination of this single unfavorable extreme, to the exclusion of other reasonable and less adverse cases, is that this tests the adequacy of our forces.

c. While it is proper to avoid undue optimism in assessing our capability, this limitation in scope also has the opposite effect. For example, the memorandum expresses confidence (page 11, 4th para) that our intelligence capabilities will be able to provide timely confirmation of a possible build-up in Soviet forces. This is a reasonable judgment in light of the significant improvements in intelligence capabilities now foreseen. It is not reasonable to conclude that these same intelligence improvements will fail completely to provide us with a greatly increased probability of strategic warning,
as well as enhanced tactical warning. By excluding such cases from the assessment, the abilities of Service recommended force levels to provide a clear war-winning capability in first-strike response, and decisive military advantage even in retaliation from a posture of enhanced readiness, are obscured.

d. The estimates of Soviet ICBM's used in the analysis (page 16) also have a major bearing on balanced assessment of the U.S. ability to strike-first, and of the effectiveness of our forces in retaliation to an enemy first-strike. The figures used are generally higher than the corresponding median views in National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's) 11-8-60 and 11-8-61. They are also higher than those used by the NESD in Phase I DOB Project 12. The recent revision to ICBM estimates in NIE 11-8/1-61 accentuates the disparity.

e. Current NIE's are not specific on probable future deployment and hardening of Soviet ICBM's, except to observe that it is "probable that the Soviets are stressing increased flexibility and decreased vulnerability in 1963 or after". However, the Secretary of Defense was briefed on 16 October 1961 on current Air Staff estimates of Soviet hardened ICBM launchers through 1967. The Air Staff estimates are considerably lower than the "median" figures used in this analysis. The Secretary of Defense commented that the lower Air Staff estimates of hard sites appeared more reasonable than the higher figures used in the Appendix.

f. This tendency toward inflation of the threat has three effects. It renders more questionable the contention that a U.S. first-strike capability "is almost certainly infeasible" (page 5). It tends to result in exaggeration of the pre-launch destruction of U.S. forces, thereby reducing their retaliatory capability. It weakens the view that Service force proposals would involve costs disproportionate to the returns in terms of target destruction (page 3, para 1; page 9, para 3).

g. Study of the force application used in the Appendix also indicates that pre-launch destruction rates used for U.S. forces (pages 18 and 19) are excessive if Soviet forces were applied in an optimal manner as stated in the Appendix (page 7, para 3; page 16, last para). This is confirmed by the fact that the factors used are more pessimistic than those used by the NESD in Project 12 Phase I and developed by WSEG Studies #50 and #80 for comparable enemy force levels. This tends to degrade the retaliatory effectiveness of U.S. forces and minimize the worth of the Service proposed higher force levels.
h. The second paragraph on page 11 provides a useful basis for summarizing the comments on Section II. This paragraph points out the essential importance of relative U.S.-USSR-numerical strengths even though force quality and survivability are also important. It also concludes with a declaration which warrants at least partial support, i.e., that "we have no intention of letting ourselves be seriously outnumbered in ICBM's by the Soviet Union." This declaration would warrant further support if it stated the intention that we will not let ourselves be outnumbered at all (seriously or otherwise), and unreserved support if it stated that we will not indeed need not -- settle for anything less than clear superiority in ICBM's and other systems. The reasons why we should not accept anything less than superiority become apparent if the three sub-paragraphs on the top of page 11 are edited to describe U.S., rather than Soviet, superiority as follows:

"a. A large Soviet U.S. superiority in ICBM's could overcome the protection afforded our Soviet ICBM's by hardening and dispersal and make it possible for the Soviet U.S. to destroy most of our the Soviet fixed-base forces in a missile attack."

"b. A large Soviet U.S. superiority in missiles would improve the outcome of a thermonuclear war."

"c. A large Soviet U.S. superiority in ICBM's would be likely to have a very unfavorable impact on Soviet aggressiveness in the cold war. (or alternatively, "...a very favorable impact upon U.S. opportunities for initiatives in the cold war")."

SECTION III

5. SPECIFIC WEAPON SYSTEM CHOICES

a. Section III commencing on page 12 describes the Basis for the OSD Recommendations on Specific Weapon System Choices. Since the Services have provided complete written and verbal justification for their submissions on each system, the details do not require repetition in these comments. Accordingly, the following is limited to specific points included in the text which warrant comment.
b. B-52's: The data on the weapon capacity of bomber alert forces shown in paragraph III a. on page 12, and similar data on pages 2, 9 and 10 inflate the programmed weapon loading of the alert force by sizeable percentage.

c. MINUTEMAN Hard & Dispersed:

(1) The judgment on the reduction in Fiscal Year 1963 procurement of MINUTEMAN from 300 to 100 provided on page 14 is that our overall force requirements do not make the Air Force proposed quantity necessary. This judgment is assertive, and is related to the entirety of the foregoing discussion of the strategy postulated in the OSD Appendix, and the analysis employed to support the conclusion that a U.S. posture which will provide the broad range of strategic options demanded by our basic national security policy "is almost certainly infeasible".

(2) With major Soviet advances in strategic strengths in prospect, it is not enough to have as our objective the avoidance of strategic inferiority. Our relative power position is on the decline, not on the rise. We risk being outstripped in the strategic area where our past supremacy was clear. We could slip into a situation where we and our Allies, rather than the Sino-Soviet Bloc, will be deterred from effective action in places and times of Communist created crises.

(3) To retain world leadership and hold our Alliances together, we must reverse the trend. This means new and improved weapon systems in the quantities required to regain and maintain decisive strategic superiority. We have the know-how and the mass production capacity. Irrespective of the Soviet lead in large liquid boosters, we have a two year lead in large-grain solid propellant boosters. MINUTEMAN is designed small in size and low in cost to permit us to get it operational in dispersed hardened silos in quantity. It gives us the option to achieve clear and survivable missile superiority during a critical time period. We must exploit our advantages and opportunities with greater vigor and resolve than our adversaries exploit theirs. We require and should procure the quantities of MINUTEMAN ICBM's recommended in the Air Force submission for the Fiscal-Year 1963 Budget.
SECTION I

6. Section I of the OSD Appendix provides a summary of Recommended Force Levels and Their Fiscal Implications. Since the foregoing comments on Sections II and III of the Appendix treat in detail the factors bearing upon the force quantities and judgments summarized in Section I, the following is limited to specific points in Section I not already covered above:

a. Page 2 of the OSD Appendix shows a force of 630 B-52 aircraft. At present 6 B-52 squadrons perform a training function and do not stand normal alert. In the 1964 time period and beyond, this can be performed by three squadrons of older "B" and "F" model aircraft. They can be released for training without degradation of the combat potential of the B-52 force if the additional wing of B-52H aircraft is procured. Otherwise, the combat ready alert-capable B-52 force should be shown as 585 aircraft.

b. Page 2 also shows only 23 squadrons (460 U.E. aircraft) of KC-97 tankers at end Fiscal Year 1962. It is believed that this inadvertently omits consideration of the Presidential decision to retain six B-47 wings, and that the figure for end FY 1962 should be 580 U.E. aircraft (29 squadrons).