

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

SP - 8/81
13 January 1981
Copy 2

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT: Comments on Your MX Paper

In general I agree with your thesis. I would prefer your solution vice MX, and I would prefer MX vice nothing. My biggest concern is that MX will get tied up in legal battles with environmentalists, and that the country will wind up with nothing. Detailed comments on your paper are given below, keyed to the page numbers of your text.

Page 2. "...one other possible objective which we should keep in mind. That is changing the general perception that we are falling behind." I agree with this, but I think it needs greater stress. The world has seen too many examples of important US defense programs like the B-1 bomber aborted by budget cutting pressures and divisions within the Administration. The image of the US as a country which has lost its sense of direction and is unable to act decisively is all too pervasive. Whether we go for MX or an alternative may in fact not be as important as the idea itself that the US is finally going to make a serious commitment to improved strategic forces.

Page 3. Your statement that the Soviets would be able to match MX shelters with warheads is valid, but might be challenged by an argument that the Soviets' resources are not inexhaustible, and they wouldn't be able to keep up in a "shelter vs. warhead" race. I think the way to preempt such an argument is to elaborate on something you touched on briefly on page 5. That is, that technology is going to make it possible to build thousands of super-accurate, relatively low-yield warheads capable of taking out the MX shelters, and that attack systems will be less costly than the shelters they are targeted on. In the long run, fixed facilities are going to lose no matter how hard they are made.

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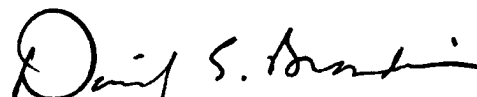
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Page 3 (bottom). The sentence which says "...a dangerous cycle of competition would have been generated...." gives the impression that the US would start the arms race by building MX. I believe the Soviets have kept the competition alive by their force programs and their decision to go for something beyond parity. The point you need to make is not that MX starts a competition, but that it does nothing to dampen the race.

Page 4 (top). You make the point about launch-on-tactical-warning being a contributor to instability. Perhaps a little more emphasis might be useful. The argument might be made that the greater the doubts a country has about the survivability of its ICBMs, the more it gets driven to buy LOTW, and the more this contributes to instability.

Page 4 (bottom). I think you need to make more of an argument for ICBMs on road mobile launchers. In your text it appears almost as an afterthought. Whether or not the TRIAD concept is still valid, you have a psychological barrier to overcome in the form of powerful people who are illogically emotional about ICBMs. If you don't give them a new ICBM to replace Minuteman and/or MX, they will tune you out. And anyway, why not a good small, truly road-mobile ICBM? Why can't we develop something along the lines of the SS-20? If we deployed it in Alaska, it wouldn't need much more range than the SS-20, and it would probably be an order of magnitude cheaper than MX.



David S. Brandwein

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