

Reject SALT, But Seek Genuine Nuclear Disarmament

By William C. Westmoreland

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Americans should be concerned about what action the Government will take to offset the Soviet Union's large-scale military buildup in both nuclear and conventional forces. As I observe the SALT process, I conclude that the odds of providing for an adequate defense and encouraging international stability would be enhanced by rejection of SALT II and its protocol. At the same time, I suggest that we accelerate efforts toward achieving genuine nuclear disarmament.

It is not the exclusion of the Soviet Backfire bomber or the problems of compliance verification that concern me. Nor am I deeply disturbed by some inequity in numbers. I am concerned about the principle that the Russians be allowed 308 SS-18 heavy-missile launchers as we are prohibited from developing a similar capability. But my major concern is the restraint imposed by the treaty and particularly the protocol on the exploitation of our technology — an area where we have been pre-eminent.

Restraints on technology force us to follow a pattern that will probably not be the most economical way to provide a deterrent to nuclear war. Without the restrictions of the treaty and its protocol, a more effective and probably less-expensive system could be developed by the use of the now-restrained cruise-missile technology, the development of mobile land-based missiles, and the deployment of more launchers at sea.

Future Federal budgets will be strained because of the energy crisis, likely persistent inflation, and the rising cost of our "welfare state." So, inevitably, military budgets will be

under extreme pressure. Therefore, a national strategy must be developed that will provide adequately for our defense and be prepared to protect our global interest at lowest cost. The current treaty will not satisfy that requirement.

I doubt that our political system will have the wisdom and courage to resist the temptation to substitute SALT II for the cost of providing an adequate defense posture. Our political democracy will be more prone to react positively to global realities if not constrained by an agreement that is more cosmetic than constructive.

Specifically, if SALT II is ratified, there will be, and should be, political pressures to go to the limit of the agreement. However, that may not provide a military capability consistent with the several threats to our future national well-being. Thus, we could be competing in an arms race within boundaries controlled in considerable degree by an adversary. Full flexibility of action will be denied us.

In this connection, the SALT process has admirably served the psychological programs of the Soviet Union by giving dramatic visibility worldwide to its military might.

It should be obvious that there are military threats to our national interest that are more likely than nuclear war. There are large and well-armed forces of the Warsaw Pact threatening the security of Western Europe and our interests there. Our most vulnerable area in the long run is the growing problem of raw materials to stoke our industrial society. Hence, the arena of potential conflict is global and the means of dealing with it involves conventional military forces — land, sea and air — coupled with skillful diplomatic action.

The threat to our economic life is far more real than the threat of nuclear war or an attack against Western Europe; it is inevitable. SALT II establishes an overriding priority to forces that could have little influence on Soviet initiatives in areas of traditional interest to us. (Witness the most recent disclosure of Soviet troops in Cuba.) Therefore, in funding programs to reduce the risks of nuclear war, we must not neglect those forces that can influence a threat to our economic well-being — forces that are flexible in their use and become visible to both friend and foe. An element of Soviet strategy, it seems, is to divert us from attending to that area.

Before we can safely disarm, we must rearm. Before we dare negotiate further with the Soviet Union, we must put ourselves in a stronger military

Meanwhile, the Senate should reject SALT II and its protocol with a mandate to the Administration to reopen talks designed genuinely to reduce nuclear weapons on an equitable basis. Such an overture could not credibly stamp us war-mongers. If the Soviet Union truly wants to decrease the possibility of nuclear war, it will accept such a proposal. If not, indeed its Government is to be viewed with even greater suspicion.

Concurrently, the Senate should commit itself to sponsoring military programs focused on the several threats facing our nation.

Finally, the Senate should set up a watchdog committee to monitor our military capability and report each year to the Administration and the public.

Soviet leaders are using the bargaining table as a weapon against us. They have been playing games with our political democracy — and winning. Myopic, vote-begging politicians have created for us a perplexing security problem. Only far-sighted statesmen who put the national interest above all else can right the situation.

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