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INFO PRIORITY MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO, MODUK

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MOSCOW AND UKDEL NATO (PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADORS)
MODUK (FOR PS/SOFS, DUS(P), ACDS(POL-NUC) DACU)

MIPT: ADMINISTRATION ARGUMENTS ON THE ABOLITION OF BALLISTIC MISSILES

1. WE HAVE HAD EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS, OVER THE PAST WEEK, IN PENTAGON, STATE, ACDA AND NSC ON THE PRESIDENT'S REYKJAVIK IDEA OF A 10 YEAR PROGRAMME TO ELIMINATE BALLISTIC MISSILES. IT IS NOT YET ATTRACTING A HIGH DEGREE OF PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE, THOUGH THE PRESIDENT HAS REFERRED TO IT IN

A NUMBER OF HIS CAMPAIGN SPEECHES, AND CONFIRMED IN DAKOTA ON 29 OCTOBER THAT HE WOULD PURSUE IT. BUT THERE CLEARLY IS CONSIDERABLE DEBATE WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION, AND THE FOLLOWING FEATURES CAN BE DISCERNED:

(A) UNEASE AMONG THE MILITARY. WHEN ALEXANDER CALLED ON GENERALS WICKHAM AND VESSER (ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF AND J5/JCS) BOTH INDICATED THAT THERE WERE SOME JCS DISQUIET ABOUT THE ELIMINATION OF BALLISTIC MISSILES. ADMIRAL COCKELL (NSC) HAS CONFIRMED THIS. BUT VESSER SEEMED TO EXPECT CONDITIONAL ACQUIESCENCE: THE CONDITIONS MIGHT CONCEIVABLY INCLUDE LINKAGE TO THE CORRECTION OF THE CONVENTIONAL IMBALANCE. PERLE HAS ALSO SPECULATED THAT THE JCS MIGHT EXPRESS PARTICULAR CONCERN ABOUT THE SPECIFIC 10 YEAR PERIOD ENVISAGED, AND POINDEXTER OF COURSE CONFIRMED TO ME THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO DISCUSSION PRE-REYKJAVIK OF ANY SUCH FINITE TIME-SPAN.

(B) WHILE THE PROPOSAL EVOKES WIDESPREAD SCEPTICISM AMONG CIVILIANS NOT DIRECTLY CONCERNED, THERE IS ALSO WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION (EG FROM HOLMES) THAT THE TASK OF BRINGING NEW MOMENTUM TO EUROPEAN CONVENTIONAL FORCE REDUCTIONS TALKS HAS BECOME MUCH MORE IMPORTANT, AS A RESULT OF REYKJAVIK. NO ONE DENIES THE FACTS OF CONVENTIONAL IMBALANCE, BUT THOSE SENIOR CIVILIAN OFFICIALS MOST INVOLVED (EG NITZE, PERLE, ADELMAN) ARE NOT READY TO AGREE THAT RECTIFYING IT SHOULD BE A CONDITION FOR ABOLISING BALLISTIC MISSILES.

2. THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE KEY OFFICIALS CONCERNED DO NOT ACCEPT THAT RESIDUAL NUCLEAR FORCES (AIRCRAFT, CRUISE MISSILES ETC) WOULD NOT PROVIDE CREDIBLE DETERRENCE. INSTEAD THEY ARGUE:

(A) (NITZE/IKLE) DETERRENCE, AND A FLEXIBLE RESPONSE STRATEGY, BASED ONLY ON AIR-BREATHING SYSTEMS WOULD ACTUALLY BE BETTER FOR NATO (BECAUSE EG SLCMS WILL BE HIGHLY SURVIVABLE, AND MIGHT IN THE LONG RUN BE HARDER TO DEFEND AGAINST THAN BALLISTIC MISSILES) AND FOR STABILITY (SINCE NEITHER BOMBERS NOR CRUISE ARE FIRST STRIKE WEAPONS).

(B) (IKLE/PERLE) A DEAL WHICH ELIMINATED BALLISTIC MISSILES ON BOTH SIDES WOULD BE HIGHLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE UNITED STATES,

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- GIVEN THE CURRENT US LEAD IN CRUISE AND BOMBER NUMBERS AND TECHNOLOGY, AND THE HUGE SOVIET INVESTMENT IN HEAVY ICBMS:
- (C) (IKLE) FOR THAT VERY REASON, NO SUCH DEAL IS NEGOTIABLE, SO WHY ARE WE WORRYING?
- (D) (POINDEXTER) THE DEAL WOULD IN ANY CASE DEPEND ON SDI DEPLOYMENT.
- (E) (COCKELL) THE US HAVE AT LEAST AN 8-10 YEAR LEAD IN STEALTH TECHNOLOGY, WITH A STEALTH CRUISE MISSILE IN THE PIPELINE, WHEREAS:
- (F) (PERLE/COCKELL) CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR US BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAMMES HAS BEEN INADEQUATE THROUGHOUT THE 80'S, AS THE MX SAGA SHOWS, AND WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO DECLINE, SO PERMITTING THE RUSSIANS STEADILY TO INCREASE THEIR LEAD IN BALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEMS (IN THE ABSENCE, PRESUMABLY, OF A 50 PER CENT REDUCTIONS DEAL).
3. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW FIRMLY ROOTED ALL OR ANY OF THESE ARGUMENTS ARE. IT MAY BE THAT, THE PRESIDENT HAVING SPOKEN IN REYKJAVIK, OFFICIALS ARE SIMPLY CASTING AROUND FOR LOGICAL ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT WHAT HE SAID. (FOR THE ANTI-ARMS CONTROLLERS, 2(C) IS OF COURSE GOOD NEWS, FOR DEADLOCK IS WHAT THEY WANT.) BUT IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE CIVILIAN POLICY-MAKING MACHINE WILL NOT OF ITSELF GENERATE ARGUMENTS AND PRESSURE ON THE WHITE HOUSE TO DROP THE ABOLITION PROPOSAL.
4. WE HAVE CONFIRMED WITH OSD AND NSC THAT THERE IS NO PRESENT INTENTION OF UNDERTAKING ANY RE-STRUCTURING OF DEFENCE PROGRAMMES, (AND THUS OF THE (2 YEAR) DEFENCE SPENDING PLAN TO BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS IN THE NEW YEAR), WHICH WOULD REFLECT ANY DOWNGRADING OF THE ROLE OF BALLISTIC MISSILES. THE PRESENT PLAN IS TO MAINTAIN FULL STEAM AHEAD ON THE NEXT TRANCHE OF 50 MX QUOTE PEACE-KEEPERS UNQUOTE, POSSIBLY THE MIDGETMAN PROGRAMME, AND CERTAINLY TRIDENT D5. ALL CONCERNED SEEM 100 PER CENT CONFIDENT THAT (A) THE PRESIDENT'S DISTASTE FOR BALLISTIC MISSILES WILL NOT LEAD HIM TO CONTEMPLATE ANY UNILATERALISM, BECAUSE (B) ONE MUST OF COURSE NEGOTIATE FROM STRENGTH, AS THE PRESIDENT HAS ALWAYS STRESSED.
5. OUR POINTS ABOUT UK TRIDENT ARE ACCEPTED; BUT THE INITIAL RESPONSE WE GET TENDS TO BE A MIXTURE OF PARA 2(C) AND 4(B) ABOVE. WHEN WE REVERT TO THE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES FOR THE UK CREATED AT REYKJAVIK (PARAS 4 AND 5 OF YOUR TELNO 1822), THE RESPONSE TENDS TO BE ONLY THAT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF THE PRIME MINISTER WERE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER PERSONALLY WITH THE PRESIDENT AT CAMP DAVID.

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