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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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May 17, 1982

DECLASSIFIED

National Security Decision
Directive Number 35

NLRR MD6-002 #24476

BY CW NARA DATE 1/15/08

THE M-X PROGRAM

NSDD-12 outlined the overall U.S. Strategic Forces Modernization Program. Item 5 of that Directive included specific guidance on M-X which is herewith amended as follows.

Land-Based Missile Development

Development of M-X will be completed and sufficient units produced to support 100 operational missiles. All work will be stopped on the Multiple Protective Shelter basing for M-X.

It is absolutely essential that we maintain the momentum of the M-X program and that we achieve Initial Operational Capability in 1986.

A DOD recommendation for a permanent basing mode for M-X shall be provided to me by November 1, 1982. Every effort should be made to provide me the DOD recommendation by September 15, 1982. If the September date is met, I will try to reach a decision by October 1. In any event, I expect to take a decision on M-X basing and so advise Congress by December 1, 1982. In this connection, the following guidance is provided:

A. Closely Spaced Basing, with growth potential for defendable/deceptive basing appears to be the most promising route to pursue.

B. R&D on Deep Underground Basing will continue because of its application to a secure reserve force, its potential for survivable C³ facilities, and its synergism with Closely Spaced Basing.

C. R&D on Ballistic Missile Defense will also continue to hedge against Soviet ABM breakout, to assist us in evaluating Soviet BMD activity, and to provide an option for increasing M-X survivability. The use of our existing BMD technology would work well to help protect a Closely Spaced Basing Field.

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D. Continuous Patrol Aircraft shall not be viewed as an option for the permanent basing of M-X. R&D on long endurance, large aircraft for other applications may continue, consistent with Congressional legislation.

E. Until the end of Fiscal Year 1982, the basing of M-X in Minuteman silos will remain an integral part of the program as a hedge against unforeseen technical developments and future program changes. Level of effort will be minimized, consistent with orderly resumption of the interim basing program in Fiscal Year 1983 if necessary.

F. While each leg of the strategic nuclear triad should be as survivable as possible, the existence of all three precludes the destruction of more than one by surprise attack and guards against technical surprise which could similarly remove one leg of the Triad.

In the upcoming START environment, an M-X program in being is more vital than ever. M-X is not intended as a "bargaining chip" to trade off against heavy missiles but rather a long-term offset to existing Soviet medium missiles.

This NSDD supersedes the appropriate portions of NSDD-12.

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