

Secretary Haig

Arms Control and Strategic Nuclear Forces

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Following is a statement by Secretary Haig before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 4, 1981.

It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the foreign policy and arms control implications of the President's strategic force modernization program. Media attention and commentary have tended to focus on the more technical aspects of the individual weapon systems rather than on the implications of the overall program for our foreign policy. I, therefore, welcome the opportunity to explore the relationship between strategic nuclear forces and our foreign policy and arms control objectives.

I am sure that the committee appreciates the historical significance of the President's decisions—decisions which will shape our strategic force policy and programs from now until the 21st century. These decisions followed what probably was the most extensive review ever undertaken of our strategic posture—the balance of nuclear forces between the United States and the Soviet Union and the range of possible program alternatives.

It is a tribute to [Defense Secretary] Cap Weinberger's skill and expertise that he has been able to sift through the computer analyses, opinions, judgments, hopes, and biases to develop for the National Security Council and the President a comprehensive and coherent plan for modernizing our strategic forces.

I, along with the other members of the National Security Council, actively

participated throughout the review process, which included a series of meetings with the President. I am persuaded that the resulting plan for strategic force modernization is the best practical program that can be achieved and is an essential ingredient for accomplishing our foreign policy and arms control objectives. It has my full support.

Let me begin by taking a moment to review the changes in the strategic nuclear equation which have occurred over the past generation. From the end of World War II until the 1970s, U.S. defense and foreign policy were underpinned by the reality of U.S. nuclear superiority. Indeed, it probably would not be too much to say that we took nuclear superiority for granted and were not fully conscious of the ways in which it shaped our thinking and our strategy.

The strategic environment of the 1980s is quite different. It is one thing to deter the use of a few nuclear weapons by an adversary who is not nearly as strong as we. It is quite another to deter an opponent whose strategic nuclear capabilities are at least the equal of ours.

We are just beginning to come to terms with the implications of this new strategic environment. Inevitably, the process includes some false starts and mistaken ideas. For example, some will say that we are locked in a "nuclear stalemate" with the Soviet Union and that we must concentrate on conventional force improvements even at the expense of strategic force modernization.

I am afraid, however, that we do not have the luxury of easy choices. We may once have looked to our advantages in nuclear forces to offset Soviet conventional capabilities, but in the strategic environment of the 1980s we have no alternative but to pursue a comprehensive and balanced program which strengthens our conventional capabilities and, at the same time, modernizes our nuclear forces.

Role of Strategic Forces

I know that this committee appreciates the interdependence of foreign and defense policy. In today's environment, foreign policy and defense policy cannot be treated as separate issues. If, in the past, we could sometimes afford the illusion that defense policy and foreign policy were unrelated—that military power was applicable only after diplomacy had failed—we can no longer.

The Soviets understand this interrelationship and use it to their advantage. They learned their lesson from the setback they suffered in the Cuban missile crisis and have built rapidly and relentlessly to become a global military power. They now have the capability—and have increasingly demonstrated the willingness—to project power and intervene in the affairs of other nations, either directly or through surrogates.

As massive as the growth in Moscow's conventional forces has been, however, it should not obscure the expansion of their strategic nuclear forces which likewise support Soviet coercion and intimidation. One of the most profound changes in the international environment over the past 15 years has been the growth in the number and quality of Soviet strategic nuclear weapons. There is no doubt they are now our equal in strategic forces and are superior in some respects. Throughout, the Soviets have demonstrated their appreciation of the fact that, even if they are never used, military capabilities—including strategic nuclear forces—are central instruments of foreign policy.

We have not always been as clear eyed as the Soviets about these international facts of life. Particularly as our nuclear advantages have eroded, we have tended to lose sight of the foreign policy functions of strategic nuclear forces. In my view, strategic nuclear forces affect:

- The quality and credibility of *deterrence*;
- Our ability and success in *crisis management*; and

- The conduct and results of American *diplomacy*.

First. The first function of nuclear forces, of course, is to deter Soviet nuclear attacks against ourselves, our allies, and our friends and—in combination with conventional forces—to deter Soviet conventional aggression. But to be effective, our deterrent must be credible. Credibility, in turn, depends upon the capabilities of our strategic nuclear forces. It depends on having forces which are flexible enough to be able to respond to a broad spectrum of threats so that whatever the circumstances and whatever the level of conflict, the Soviets never have an incentive to launch a nuclear attack.

The President's plan strengthens our deterrent in the face of the changing Soviet threat. The clearest example of this is the decision to build and deploy the MX missile. If we are to deter the Soviet Union we must put at risk those things—including their military capabilities—which they value most. The question is not whether we want to build a system with the unique capabilities embodied in the MX, but whether we can maintain an adequate deterrent without it.

Second. The nuclear balance inevitably affects the political and psychological environment within which deep international crises must be managed. The confidence which we have in our nuclear deterrent cannot but influence how we will behave in a crisis. Our strategic nuclear capabilities also affect the perceptions of our adversaries: Doubts about our strategic nuclear deterrent can only increase the chance that our political will would be tested during crises.

Put simply, our own vulnerability to nuclear blackmail, as well as the susceptibility of our friends to political intimidation, depends upon our ability and willingness to cope credibly with any Soviet threat of escalation. A strong and flexible nuclear capability enhances stability by discouraging any Soviet temptation toward adventurism at the same time that it strengthens our hand in responding to Soviet political-military threats.

Third. Short of crisis, nuclear weapons perform an important function in the conduct of day-to-day diplomacy. Just as broad military capabilities form the backdrop against which foreign policy is conducted, the strategic nuclear balance casts a shadow which affects every geopolitical decision of significance. The image of U.S. strength and the perception of U.S. commitment

permeates into every region of the world. The nuclear balance is a crucial, if unstated, factor for all those countries who seek stable security arrangements in the face of Soviet expansionism.

This is particularly the case for our allies. The strategic force modernization we are now undertaking is a key element in the continued health and unity of the Atlantic alliance. For more than 30 years the fate of the United States and its European allies has been inseparable. By correcting the perceptions—and reality—of emerging imbalances in strategic forces, we will underscore our commitment to resist Soviet expansionist goals and reaffirm the credibility of the "nuclear umbrella" which we extend over our allies.

These three functions of nuclear weapons—deterrence, crisis management, and day-to-day diplomacy—are enduring. Our fundamental goals for our strategic forces have not changed. What has changed is the level and character of the Soviet threat—the number and quality of their nuclear weapons. The President's plan is designed to counter this evolving threat by deploying forces that will strengthen deterrence and deny the Soviets any possibility of coercion.

The President's Strategic Force Modernization Program

The President's decisions on strategic force modernization support our foreign policy in several important respects.

The decision to deploy the MX missile demonstrates that we understand the importance of a land-based force in a strong and credible deterrent. MX deployment—first in hardened silos and later in a more permanent basing mode—reaffirms our commitment to maintain the diverse capabilities of the strategic triad in the face of an evolving Soviet threat.

The Trident II missile will provide qualitative improvements in the capabilities of the sea-based leg. The decision to develop the Trident II is important for the long-term viability of our submarine deterrent and for enhancing the effectiveness of our strategic triad.

The President's program also recognizes that a secure strategic reserve—that is, forces which can endure even in the event of a large or extended nuclear conflict—can be a critical element in enhancing nuclear deterrence. He, therefore, has decided to deploy sea-based cruise missiles to improve the resilience and effectiveness of our strategic reserve weapons as well as promptly to redress the growing imbalance in strategic forces.

As the NATO alliance concluded after the thorough study leading to its 1979 decision, however, sea-based systems cannot counter the Soviet theater nuclear forces (TNF) threat to NATO. Land-based LRTNF [long-range TNF] systems in Europe, therefore, are absolutely necessary to fill the gap in the continuum of deterrence resulting from Soviet TNF buildup and to strengthen the link between the defense of Europe and U.S. strategic forces. Sea-based cruise missiles, by contrast, would not directly respond to the Soviet land-based threat nor provide for widespread alliance participation in the defense of Europe.

Like sea-based cruise missiles, the B-1B bomber also reflects the near-term necessity to correct the growing imbalance in strategic forces. At the same time, the President's decision recognizes the long-term importance of bombers for conventional missions. It will meet our requirement for a modernized penetrating bomber until the Stealth aircraft becomes available and, thereafter, will continue to perform essential nuclear and conventional roles. Just as B-52s have performed useful missions for more than a generation, the B-1B will serve us into the 21st century.

The new emphasis on command and control, along with strategic defenses, are essential elements in the overall modernization plan. Both have been long neglected. Yet even small improvements in command and control can result in major improvements in the effectiveness of our strategic weapons. Strategic defenses also do much to reduce the effectiveness of Soviet forces and—from Moscow's perspective—make the outcome of a Soviet attack much less predictable.

The President's decision on ballistic missile defense warrants special comment. This decision does not commit us to withdraw from the ABM Treaty nor to modify it. It does expand research and development, allowed within the bounds of the treaty, to see if the new technology in this field can enhance the survivability of our land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Decisions with respect to the treaty itself will be taken only after long and hard study and following close consultations with the Congress and with our allies. We are nowhere close to such a decision.

The Alliance and Arms Control

Taken together, these programs strengthen the alliance and insure its vitality. By strengthening the bridge between theater and strategic forces and

linking the defense of our homeland with that of our allies, they provide tangible proof that we consider European security to be indistinguishable from our own. As such, the strategic force modernization program is the perfect complement of our plans to deploy LRTNF systems in Europe, and will increase allied support for that vital program.

The allies share our view that any real prospects for arms control can come only from a position of strength. They—like we—understand that implementation of the TNF modernization program is an indispensable part of our effort to achieve a successful outcome of the TNF negotiations with the Soviets which begin later this month in Geneva.

As you know, our objective in those negotiations is a verifiable agreement that would achieve significant reductions on both sides, leading to equal ceilings at the lowest possible levels—levels which, ideally, could be zero.

Our fundamental goals for our strategic forces have not changed. What has changed is the level and character of the Soviet threat—the number and quality of their nuclear weapons. The President's plan is designed to counter this evolving threat by deploying forces that will strengthen deterrence and deny the Soviets any possibility of coercion.

In formulating the proposals we will present to the Soviets on November 30, we have engaged in a consultation process with our allies of unprecedented intensity. While these will be difficult negotiations, there should be no doubt that we will enter these talks with the united backing of our allies and with shared determination to reach an equitable outcome.

As in upcoming TNF talks, we have little hope of making any headway in strategic arms control unless we begin to take the steps needed to restore our deterrent capability. We intend to maintain the strategic arms control process but to seek agreements from a secure and confident military position.

Moscow's strategic buildup has put our crucial land-based missiles and bombers at risk. Only a strong and balanced program of strategic force modernization will provide sufficient incentive for the Soviets to negotiate meaningful agreements. The B-1, for example, will insure that the triad retains the unique and important military characteristics of the bomber—a traditional U.S. advantage—and should increase Soviet willingness to negotiate seriously. Likewise, deployment of MX

will break the Soviet monopoly on large, accurate missiles and may, for the first time, give them incentive to negotiate real reductions in their ICBM force. More than any other elements of the plan, B-1 and MX—and the degree of Congress' support for them—will make or break our attempt to negotiate a reasonable arms control agreement.

If we fail to adopt the President's program, however, we will have dimmed our hopes of reaching an arms control agreement on strategic forces. It is as indispensable to the success of our efforts at strategic arms control as TNF modernization is to the success of the talks beginning in Geneva. This plan will give us the base from which to enter into strategic arms negotiations which, if successful, can help maintain a stable strategic balance and a stable peace.

Conversely, if critics succeed in pecking and nibbling at this or that detail of the program rather than

treating it as a coherent whole, the credibility of our commitment to meet the Soviet challenge will be undermined, and the prospects for meaningful strategic arms limitations will be jeopardized.

We have made good progress in addressing the complex questions that must be answered before we reopen strategic arms talks with Moscow. The Reagan Administration is analyzing—as it must—a diversity of options and alternatives in formulating our negotiating approach, ranging from relatively straightforward modifications to the SALT II Treaty to completely new approaches to limit Soviet strategic power.

As you know, while this review has been underway, our policy has been not to undercut existing agreements so long as the Soviets exercise the same restraint. This environment of mutual restraint has provided a good basis for our preparations to resume talks with the Soviets to limit strategic arms.

We now hope that negotiations could begin as early as next spring. But, as I have said before, arms control negotiations cannot be conducted in a political

vacuum. They must be closely related to the overall state of U.S.-Soviet relations. This is not a policy of mechanistic linkage but a simple political fact of life.

Conclusion

The President's program of strategic force modernization reaffirms the most basic tenets of long-time U.S. policies regarding nuclear weapons while correcting the programmatic shortcomings of the past. It recognizes the strategic environment as it is, not as we would wish it to be. It builds a foundation

which will allow us to negotiate changes to improve that environment and increase the prospects for peace and stability.

I have been involved in strategic force modernization issues for more than 20 years. This is the first time I have seen a President presented with such a coherent and comprehensive approach to force modernization and deterrence. And it is certainly the first time I have seen a President take decisions that modernize all elements of the strategic triad and its supporting infrastructure at one time.

This is an integrated, pragmatic, achievable, and far-reaching program. It is the solid, essential basis for the achievement of our foreign policy and arms control objectives over the coming years. ■

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