



April 19, 1971

**Memorandum from Andropov to Ustinov, Regarding
US Positions in the Anti-Ballistic Missile
Negotiations**

Citation:

"Memorandum from Andropov to Ustinov, Regarding US Positions in the Anti-Ballistic Missile Negotiations", April 19, 1971, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD, F. 5, Op. 63, D. 193, Ll. 33-38. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115980>

Summary:

KGB chief Andropov analyzes the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty negotiations, particularly the US negotiating positions and the preferences of various Washington agencies.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

USSR

Top secret

The Committee for State Security

19 April 1971

No. 983-A To Comrade USTINOV, D.F.

Moscow

The available data bears witness to the fact that the position of the USA on the problem of limiting the arms race remains the same. Nixon's government proceeds from the fact that the suggestions introduced by the American delegation last August in Vienna provide the basis for achieving an agreement advantageous to the United States. It will use all means to strive for the consolidation of the quantitative balance of strategic weapons between the USA and the USSR at the present-day level, trying to preserve definite advantages in the most important kinds of strategic weapons. In the course of the negotiations, at the end of February 1971, while talking to a diplomat from one of the U.S. allies, the head of the American delegation, Smith, announced that the USA intended to conduct the negotiations firmly, in order to obtain the agreement of the USSR on limitation of offensive strategic weapons. Experts, close to the U.S. government circles, state that the main goal of the USA in the negotiations remains the achievement of an agreement on limitation of the number of big Soviet offensive inter-continental ballistic missiles.

According to information we have received, as far as the present stage of the negotiations is concerned, U.S. government bodies devote their main attention to studying the possibility of achieving a separate agreement on anti-missile defense systems. As noted by American experts, the USSR proposal on limiting the deployment of ABM systems to means necessary for the defense of Moscow and Washington D.C., introduced during the previous stage of the negotiations, put Nixon in a kind of difficult position. On the one hand, as for its contents, the Soviet proposal is very similar to the one on ABM introduced by the US before, together with other questions, and that's why it would have been difficult for Nixon to reject it completely. On the other hand, Nixon couldn't refuse to deploy the "Safeguard" ABM system, since it would have been difficult for him to explain this concession in his country. Some time ago he managed, with great difficulty, to get agreement on the allocation of the means needed for its deployment, having persuaded the Congress that ABM "Safeguard" could provide effective defense from a possible USSR first strike, and that its creation would save the USA further big new expenditures on a quantitative increase in offensive strategic weapons.

The harshest objections to the Soviet proposal will come from Pentagon officials, who assert that if it is adopted without the simultaneous achievement of an agreement on strategic offensive weapons the Soviet Union will continue its unlimited increase in its fleet of missile-carrying nuclear submarines and big land-based IBM missiles ("SS-9") configured with MIRVed warheads, and as a result it will get an opportunity to make a "preventive strike," which could eliminate the majority of American "Minutemen" ICBMs.

Pentagon representatives also express concern that a separate agreement on limiting the deployment of ABM systems to the defense of just the capitals of both states could inspire strong opposition to the MIRV-type warheads deployment program in Congress and U.S. political circles. Air Force representatives insist on continuing the intensive deployment of a broad system of "Safeguard" ABM.

The ACDA [Arms Control and Disarmament Agency] attitude is more flexible. It introduced a proposal which provides an opportunity to conclude a separate agreement on ABM systems, under the condition that negotiations on the limitation of the number of offensive strategic weapons will be carried out at the same time, and that during the negotiations the USSR and the USA will undertake the obligation to

"freeze" the number of their strategic offensive weapons. Kissinger regarded this as the basic variant during a private channel exchange of opinions on ABM with a Soviet representative.

According to information from American sources, the USA National Security Council (NSC) is studying the proposal of a temporary agreement on the limitation of ABM systems deployment during the period of negotiations on limiting strategic offensive weapons along with a simultaneous "freeze" of offensive nuclear weapons at the present level.

Nixon's comments about the negotiations in his message about USA foreign policy indicate that he, evidently moving away from the more flexible position which Kissinger expressed to us, is more inclined to accept the Pentagon's point of view.

Nevertheless, Nixon is not interested in aggravating relations between the USSR and the USA during the presidential campaign, and that is why, while holding to a really rigid position during the negotiations, including the ABM question, he at the same time will try to create an impression of constructivism and flexibility in his approach to Soviet proposals. Tough, uncompromising declarations in official propaganda, to the effect that in the negotiations the USA will firmly insist on its position that a separate agreement on ABM without a corresponding agreement on limitation of offensive nuclear weapons is unacceptable, should, in Nixon's conception, favorably highlight a possible American proposal to conclude a separate agreement on ABM limitation, which would include the preservation and even further development of the "Safeguard" ABM system in the USA, while at the same time limiting the ABM systems in the USSR to those necessary just for the protection of Moscow.

Judging by information in our possession, the NSC, while preparing recommendations for the American delegation to the negotiations in Vienna, again strongly opposed the inclusion of American means of forward basing on the agenda, motivated in its position by the fact that otherwise the whole structure of NATO would have to be changed, and the USA would lose an important military advantage, as a result of which the general strategic balance would be changed to the advantage of the USSR. The NSC pointed out that the means of forward basing could be a subject for discussion during negotiations between NATO and Warsaw Treaty Countries on the question of balanced limitation of armed forces in Europe.

According to certain information, one of the variants studied by the NSC provides for the American side to put forward a proposal to simultaneously "freeze" the existing number of Soviet intermediate and medium range missiles and the American means of forward basing if, due to great differences in points of view on means of forward basing, the negotiations will come to a dead end and appear to be under threat of breakdown.

Through unofficial channels the Americans inform us that Nixon's government, while "sincerely wishing" to achieve concrete results during the negotiations, at the same time "can't wait endlessly" and is interested in achieving an agreement with the USSR by the end of 1971, because the beginning of the electoral campaign will make it difficult for him to bargain with the USSR. But the intent of these statements, it seems, is to influence the position of the USSR during the negotiations. According to existing information, Kissinger in a private talk said that from a political point of view it may be more beneficial for Nixon if the agreement with the USSR were to be achieved closer to the presidential elections. According to a statement by the American representative to the Disarmament Committee in Geneva, the USA is ready to conduct at least three more rounds (the present one included) of negotiations, striving first of all to get the agreement of the USSR on limitation of strategic offensive weapons.

At the same time, not being sure that they will manage to obtain the agreement of the USSR on a complex accord on the limitation of ABM systems and strategic offensive weapons on terms acceptable to the U.S., the Americans might put forward a proposal for partial agreement. Most probably it would be a proposal to limit ABM deployment to the "Safeguard" system for the USA and an ABM system around Moscow for the USSR.

And if American attempts to obtain a separate, favorable to them, agreement on ABM systems fail, they would prefer just to conclude a treaty on measures for reducing the danger of an outbreak of nuclear war between the USA and USSR.

CC CPSU is informed.

Head of the State Security Committee

[signature] ANDROPOV