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GLENN T. SEABORG
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Saturday, March 15, 1969 - D. C. Office

I attended a meeting of the National Security Council, in the Cabinet Room at the White House, from approximately 10:00 to 11:15 a.m.

Present: President Nixon, Vice President Agnew, Gerard Smith (ACDA), myself, Lee A. DuBridge, Henry Kissinger, Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Secretary Melvin Laird (DOD), Secretary William Rogers (DOS), Richard M. Helms (CIA), Elliott Richardson (DOS), and George A. Lincoln (OEP), plus Spurgeon Keeny and Col. Alexander Haig on the side line.

When President Nixon entered the room, and we all stood up, he noticed my presence and said, "Hi, Glenn." After we had all been seated, he called on Kissinger to set the basis for the meeting. Kissinger outlined the three items that were up for discussion: (1) the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB); (2) the Cutoff of Production of Fissionable Material for Weapons; and (3) the Proposal for Seabed Arms Control. He said that on each of these items the U.S. has a present position at the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC), and the question will be whether the proposal is in the net security interest of the U.S. and should we maintain our present position or should we take a modified position. As an argument for the CTB, he pointed out that such a test ban would inhibit the Soviet progress on the MIRV and the ABM, that the previous problem on this has been a disagreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union on the matter of on-site inspections, and that

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our own testing requirements are such that we would be in a position to accept a CTB some three years from now. Arguments against the CTB include our immediate need for testing, our continuing need to validate our weapons stockpile by testing, some inhibition to the peaceful uses of nuclear explosives, and our inability to test new weapons concepts.

President Nixon then called on Jerry (Smith) to explain the nature of the ENDC and inquired whether the NPT originated from the ENDC. He also indicated that he would want Smith to take positive positions at the ENDC and not merely indulge in gamesmanship. Smith explained the history of the ENDC and pointed out the role it had played in developing the NPT. President Nixon inquired specifically as to Soviet interest in participating in the ENDC and asked if they sent high ranking people to the deliberations. Smith said the soviets took it very seriously and did send high ranking representatives. He said that the ENDC is a very useful forum and results in much publicity for arms control type negotiations. He also pointed out that there is a commitment in Article VI of the NPT to carry on negotiations in the arms limitation field. President Nixon asked what the Soviets were proposing in the ENDC, and Smith cited such aims as the banning of nuclear weapons, the cutback on strategic nuclear weapons, the prohibition of flights of bombers carrying nuclear weapons, the banning of underground tests (which raises the problem of on-site inspections), the

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prohibition of chemical and biological warfare agents, the dismantling of military bases, the creation of nuclear free zones and the peaceful uses of the seabed.

The President then asked Smith for a summary of his general views of what the U.S. philosophy should be. and he said that he tended toward a program with the following four objectives: (1) a ban on the transfer of nuclear weapons from one country to another (for which the NPT represents great progress); (2) an eventual ban on all nuclear weapons testing; (3) the cutoff in production of fissionable material for use in nuclear weapons; and (4) a ban on the deployment of nuclear weapons (for which the Antarctic treaty, the Outer Space treaty and now the Seabed Arms Control proposal are examples of progress). The President asked whether it was possible to fix nuclear weapons on the seabed, and Wheeler and I both replied in the affirmative. Smith said that we should probably emphasize the seabed proposal and seek to define what is fixed and also focus on the feasibility of verification. He turned to Helms to comment on verification, and Helms said that verification is feasible. Rogers urged that we reaffirm our support for the Seabed Arms Control proposal and indicated that, in any case, it would probably take four or five years of negotiation to accomplish such a treaty. Smith said it would take as long as he was in office, and the President indicated that it might even take longer than that.

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The President then asked for the position of the Department of Defense. Secretary Laird said that some elements of the Defense Department had traditionally taken a rather negative position. He said they feel there are certain things that have higher priority, such as the clarification of the outer boundaries of a country in the ocean, the matter of fishing rights, and things of that sort. He said the DOD doesn't have any definite program for fixing weapons systems in the sea but the Joint Chiefs of Staff have urged that we not make any commitment that would forbid this. He then called on General Wheeler for his views. General Wheeler said that they have some interest and equipment in the seas, including fixed equipment but this is non-nuclear. He said that he doesn't actually oppose the ultimate attainment of a Seabed Arms Control treaty but there has never been a serious study of its implications, and we don't know too much about the ocean and the ocean beds. He feels, in connection with negotiating such a treaty, that we could talk about boundaries, verification procedures, etc., and he feels that Smith could be occupied with this aspect for some months. Secretary Laird said that he doesn't oppose the concept of such a treaty but feels there should be a go-ahead for general discussion although we shouldn't agree to all the details of the suggested proposals at the present time.

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The President reiterated that our general posture is against proliferation and the three areas under discussion should be pursued. He said it is important that we not present a picture of dragging our feet. Vice President Agnew said that there is strong support for such a seabed treaty in the Marine Council and in the Senate by such Senators as Pell. DuBridge supported Agnew on this by saying that such a treaty is almost a prerequisite for the large international program for scientific cooperation concerning matters of the ocean which is getting started. He said we would certainly need to agree not to use the ocean for military bases if these programs are going to be successful.

The Vice President reiterated that he thought we should go ahead with the seabed treaty because this would be the safest area in which to begin arms talks. The President asked whether Senator Pell was actually so interested, and the Vice President indicated that Pell already has a treaty drawn up for consideration. The President stated that he agrees in principle with going ahead with such a treaty, and that he feels strongly that we should "take a positive position on this." He said that we should be very specific and not indulge in general malarky in our negotiations. He said we should identify and pick out hard items, make our position clear and negotiate on these.

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DuBridge indicated again that this would advance the general concept of an International Decade of Ocean Exploration, which has been advanced by the United States, and the President said that perhaps this thought should be used in Smith's statement at the ENDC. Agnew again emphasized that the International Decade of Ocean Exploration was our initiative. The President emphasized that the treaty should clearly refer to fixed nuclear installations outside of our territorial limits in the ocean. This led to a general discussion of the international controversy that surrounds the 12-mile limit.

We then turned to the other items. I said that I was in complete agreement on the desirability of a Seabed Arms Control treaty, but I wanted to identify some problems with the CTB and the proposal for the cutoff of nuclear materials for use in weapons. I said that our testing requirements are such that we couldn't develop the ABM and the MIRV warheads if we stopped testing immediately. We require a minimum of two more years of testing to develop the SPARTAN warhead and a minimum of one year to develop the MIRV warheads. There are also some other problems that need to be identified. It is desirable to be in a position to test our stockpile weapons of all kinds because we have found in the past a number of problems that made this necessary. Speaking of the cutoff, I mentioned the need to have a provision for continued tritium production. I

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said that our stockpile of enriched uranium and plutonium is such that we could just barely meet the DOD base weapons program if there was a cutoff within the next year or two and couldn't entirely meet the DOD contingency program, corresponding to a greater than expected threat, and we, of course, couldn't come near meeting the Joint Chiefs of Staff's suggested program. In order to meet the base program, it would be necessary to take all the material from the pipeline and even encroach upon the plutonium set aside for peaceful uses. Smith pointed out that we had quite an edge on the amount of enriched uranium and plutonium in comparison with the Soviets, and, therefore, a cutoff now would be to our advantage. He also said that an arrangement is contemplated whereby the tritium that has decayed would show up as helium-3, which could then be used as a basis for a replacement of the tritium; I agreed that this was an entirely feasible procedure. General Wheeler said that in addition to the problems I had identified was the one of the requirement of continued testing in order to work on the problem of hardening our warheads. He also identified and emphasized the problem of tritium replacement. He said that the Intelligence estimates of the stockpile of Soviet fissionable material were rather soft and, therefore, he wasn't too impressed by the argument that we had substantially more than that. Helms agreed that they were soft estimates.

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Kissinger said that it certainly wouldn't be feasible to walk away from our previous positions. The President said he agreed to this and that we should maintain the three proposals that we were discussing and not withdraw them from the ENDC. He said that with respect to the CTB and the Seabed Arms Control proposal, we should lay out our former position and "let it rest there." This, then, might be accomplished by a full review within the U.S. Government as to the consequences of these proposals with the view of determining or modifying our future position. He indicated that if our national security depended in a very serious way on making weapons tests we would have to do so, even under the circumstances of a treaty

DuBridge said that he would like to make three points: (1) that the Soviets were catching up with us in their stockpile of fissionable material for weapons and this would stop them from reaching our level; (2) it is becoming easier to detect weapons testing through satellites and seismic means as a result of technological advances and, hence, were in less need of on-site inspections; and (3) that tritium is not fissionable and, there, might not be involved in the cutoff. I said that because tritium is a reactor product, it is treated in the same way as plutonium and would be involved in any cutoff. I said that I wanted to make it clear that I was supporting the U.S. position on the CTB and on the cutoff, especially as

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the position had been restated by the President. I said I just wanted to make it clear what the problems were and that they were understood. In the case of cutoff in production, I reiterated that it would be [very tight to meet the DOD weapons bill requirement even for the base program, and this would be even more difficult] if the two Hanford reactors were shut down.

I suggested privately to Smith that he bring up the matter of the proposed transfer of 60 tons of enriched uranium-235 from weapons for peaceful uses. Smith brought up this point, pointing out that part of the cutoff proposal was that the U.S. would transfer 60 tons of enriched uranium-235, and the Soviets would transfer 40 tons. Smith said that there had been some suggestions that the U.S. change their position to insist on a 50-50 arrangement with the Soviet Union, but Smith was not in favor of it. Rogers said he thought it would be better not to change any of these positions and that we should stay with the 60-40 ratio; the President agreed with him.

Thus, in summary, it was agreed that the U.S. position would be to remain with all three proposals at the ENDC, recognizing that long negotiations would be required and that there would be opportunities to re-evaluate our position as these negotiations proceeded.

[Omitted here are the President's closing comments, in which he indicated that the discussion of Vietnam scheduled for this NSC meeting would be postponed to the next one.]