

DRAFT 6/9/69

MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING OF
APRIL 30, 1969SUBJECT: Eighteen Nation Disarmament Treaty, specifically the
Seabeds Treaty

U. S. Policy Towards Japan

Attendees: (List can be obtained from NSC Secretariat)

The meeting convened at 10:00 a. m. and was introduced by the President. The first topic for discussion was the U. S. participation in the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC) and the decision to be faced at this meeting was whether or not the U. S. would accept the initiative of the Soviet Union to enter into a seabeds treaty banning the use of nuclear weapons on the bed of the open ocean floor. The President commented that the initial meeting of the ENDC held in Geneva had moved far more rapidly than had originally been anticipated. The President stated that the decision at hand today was whether or not the U. S. wished to enter into a seabed treaty with the Soviet Union at this time. He listed the pros and cons of such a course of action. Under the pros were: a) such a treaty would reduce the proliferation of nuclear weapons; b) such a treaty might reduce growing pressures for greater demilitarization worldwide; and c) such a treaty would reinforce U. S. efforts favoring the peaceful

development of the open seas. The cons working against a U. S. decision to enter into such a treaty were: a) ~~they would~~ such a treaty would deny the U. S. the option of utilizing international seas for the emplacement of nuclear weapons; b) at the present time the actual potential value of seabeds were not known and a treaty at this time might be premature; and c) entering into such a treaty might open up demands on the part of the Soviets for information on our current undersea military capability, which are especially sensitive in the anti-submarine acoustical area. In general, the President stated, the Department of Defense was opposed to such a treaty while the Department of State was in favor. Other issues involved in this seabed treaty included a) whether or not the treaty should include the banning of all types of weapons, fixed and mobile or be limited only to fixed weapons which might be emplaced on the seabeds thereby excluding submarine launched nuclear weapons; b) whether or not such a treaty should provide for specific inspection and enforcement procedures. Favoring an affirmative answer to this issue would be that proper inspection would of course reinforce the treaty. The disadvantage of such a provision would be the development of pressures for the U. S. to reveal sensitive SOSIS development which we have already achieved and in an area in which the Soviets are badly lagging; c) how far reaching such a treaty might be. For example, should it ban nuclear weapons right up to the coast line of the respective signatories or should it be limited up to accepted territorial waters three miles or twelve miles. The key issue in the President's view is whether we should in fact have a treaty at all.

The Secretary of State stated that a seabed treaty is in our national interest, assuming it does not pose greater disadvantages and specifically if these disadvantages do not place us in a position of military inferiority to the Soviet Union.

The President asked Mr. Smith, Director of Disarmament Agency, for a finite presentation on what the U. S. is really seeking under such a treaty. Mr. Smith stated that he would like to touch upon the background of how we got where we are today. Several years ago a proposal for a seabed treaty was introduced at the United Nations. At that time the issue was complete demilitarization versus partial or complete denuclearization. If such a treaty, ~~SECRETARY ROBERTS CONTINUED~~, Mr. Smith continued, were to continue within the auspices of the United Nations then pressures would grow for complete demilitarization of the open seas and the ENDC was an effort supported by the U. S. to extract this issue from the UN so that the less-developed countries could not continue pressuring for complete demilitarization. Technically, the ENDC is not conducted under the auspices of the UN. We and the Soviets both see this as a means of dealing with this problem in a more realistic and hopeful way. Just prior to the recent meeting of the ENDC in Geneva, I as the U. S. delegate was armed with a Presidential letter which expressed the U. S. interest in a seabed treaty. I read this letter to the Conference. Simultaneously and somewhat unexpectedly, the Soviets tabled a complete treaty proposal with the support of Sweden, Egypt, Ethiopia and the remainder of the Eastern Bloc. It is obvious that the Eastern Bloc and certain neutral countries will favor the

Soviet proposal unless we come up with a counter proposal of our own. Thus it is simple that we need a seabed treaty proposal of our own. ~~THE~~ A U. S. initiative in this area would show our total support of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, specifically Article 6. In general, the tabling of a U. S. draft would advance our interests because one may simply ask if we cannot arrive at a treaty in this area where controls are relatively simple and progress to date had been so limited, how could we expect to arrive at a viable agreement in the strategic arms limitation area.

The President then asked the Secretary of Defense to comment. Secretary Laird stated, we take an entirely different view, that is, both the Secretary of Defense and his staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff: 1) It is clearly to the advantage of the Soviet Union. The Soviets have less access to the open seas and they are primarily dependent on land mass for the emplacement of their weapons. On the other hand, the U. S. has a large measure of its offensive strategic capability on sea-based platforms. Secondly, the U. S. has far greater knowledge in this particular area. We have a SOSIS system on the seabeds which is so effective at detecting the movement of Soviet nuclear submarines in the open seas. Thirdly, it would be very difficult to develop a policing capability to verify compliance with such a treaty. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, such a treaty would constitute a piecemeal approach of dealing with the arms control issue.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Wheeler, added, I agree precisely with Secretary Laird's analysis, as do the Joint Chiefs themselves. We have looked at this seabed treaty issue over the years and have concluded that such a treaty may not in fact be in the national interest because it does not enhance our overall security.

The President inquired whether even a minimum package might be acceptable. General Wheeler replied, we have no ongoing program for weapons development on the seabeds but frankly we know very little of what the ocean floor can do for us. Our knowledge is quite small. The Soviets have twice our land mass. We have a distinct advantage with respect to contiguous waters and accessibility to these waters. Furthermore, verification procedures would be most difficult, especially in the Baltic and Black Seas which are in effect inland seas of the Soviet Union. As a simple matter, the seabed treaty would give the Soviets an enhanced opportunity to capitalize on the seabeds in a way in which we could not verify. Finally, we are very concerned about a compromise of our SOSIS system, which the Soviets do not have.

Secretary of State interrupted, this would not be included in our proposed draft treaty so why does the SOSIS issue become involved?

Secretary Laird stated, simply because to establish acceptable verification procedures we would have to jeopardize the presence and technical capabilities of our SOSIS.

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Mr. Smith replied, this would not necessarily involved a compromise of our SOSIS system. All that we would have to insist on in inspection is whether or not nuclear weapons were emplaced and the fact that SOSIS does not ~~include~~ involve nuclear should preclude it from detailed inspection.

General Wheeler stated, I am not so sure. We are now in a program of enlarging the size of our closest phones which would be quite simple to pick up under a good verification system.

The President asked whether or not as General Rickover (?) has stated the Soviet nuclear submarine capability is growing substantially.

Laird said that he agreed that it was.

The President then asked Mr. Smith whether or not specifically his draft would go beyond verification for nuclears.

Secretary Laird continued, I think we are just starting to get into trouble on our land-based strategic systems and we may well need the ocean floors to develop our future capabilities. If we are to trade this option away we should certainly get something for it in return.

Secretary Rogers asked, Mel you are saying we just can't have a treaty period. If we use the twelve-mile limit as the provisions for such a treaty, then we can in effect have the best of both worlds since everything within twelve miles would be available for the emplacement of future systems.

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Laird said, I would like to make it clear that the seas are not like outer space where we have no specific advantage. The seabeds do afford us an advantage which we should not lightly opt out of. Why should we give up so much for nothing?

The President added, it appears that time is a factor on the issue. Suppose our strategic arms limitations talks progress rapidly how long would it take to get progress in this area.

Mr. Smith stated, we could get some kind of an agreement as early as September and then move it to the General Assembly. In short, it is very possible that we could have a complete seabed treaty with the Soviet Union as early as this coming September.

Mr. Kissinger asked whether or not we were actually obligated to table a draft treaty?

Secretary Rogers answered, we stated we were ready. The Soviets had tabled their own version. Now it is up to us.

The President stated, well certainly we will need some time to think about this and to consult with our NATO Allies.

The Vice President stated, I am concerned that we are always responding to Soviet initiatives. Why the double standards here? They are _____. We always examine on their terms. We are hemmed in by always letting them put us in a corner. I support the Secretary of Defense. We will never satisfy the disarmament critics no matter what we do. Why don't we counter with some tough proposals of our own?

The Secretary of State stated, our NATO friends think we are not interested and then we look arbitrary to them.

The Vice President added, so what? Why don't we have our own proposal?

Mr. Smith said this is our proposal, Mr. Vice President. We have stated for some time that we want to terminate the arms race. How can we fail to do this now?

General Lincoln stated, we've moved way down the road on this disarmament issue and we probably cannot turn back now. However, we need security guarantees. Also we should ask ourselves whether or not movement here could trigger movement in other areas.

Secretary Laird stated, anything we do at the ENDC will be snapped up by the other side. Look what the Soviet have done so far.

Under Secretary of State, Mr. Richardson, said, looking at relations as a whole, what are we going to get out of such a treaty. We ~~should make the terms. If we are talking in two~~ should be concerned if we are talking in two forums. In other words, it would be foolhardy to be very forthcoming here. ~~By other words,~~ If the Soviets are intransigent with respect to our other relationships, it is a question of moving on all thoughts? simultaneously.

The President stated, I supported the Test Ban Treaty with strong reservations. As I look back, I don't think this Test Ban Treaty helped us nor did it hurt us. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ The seabed treaty might be in both of our interests.

*Could
not under-
stand the
topic. There
was an echo.*

The President then asked,

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Laird stated, what has this got to do with the problem?

The President asked, aren't the Soviets actually ahead of us in oceanography. Most of the members of the Council agreed that they probably were.

The President then summarized this has been a helpful discussion. We must take judgments on all of the factors, not just security and not just initial implications. But we must remember one solid fact. If the Soviet power is to be deterred ~~only~~ it will only happen in this room. We are the individuals who must orchestrate that effort. We are not to be influenced excessively by other nations and what other nations think are good. We must base the decisions on our own interests. It may be that under this formula it is well to proceed with the seabed treaty. But we must remember that it is our decision to make. We've got to decide on our own interests as we see it. We lead the free world. We must pay attention to this obligation and responsibility.

The President continued, if we are to lead the free world . [Omission in original]
____ [Omission in original] _____ but we must base our decision on our own interests and what we consider to be their own interests. On occasion it may be necessary for us to bring them along or to influence them basically in our own direction.

MSS DIV LIB CONG.

The President then asked Mr. Smith if he had a draft treaty ready for tabling.

Dr. DuBridge stated he would like to add his support for the seabed treaty, stating that if the Soviets are allowed to maintain the initiative it would be turned against us.

The President said this will conclude our discussion of the seabed treaty. ~~Now~~ I will consider it and announce my decision.

[Omitted here is discussion of U.S.-Japan relations.]