

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

BY dal NARA DATE 12/10/08

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Monday, February 16, 1976
9:35 - 10:10 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

Kissinger: My own view is that if this fails, we should suspend SALT until after the elections. This option is so much worse than Option II, but you can't even get an honest discussion of the issues. Under IV, DOD was willing to give them 230 Backfire. They are not planning more than 450-500, they couldn't be. And with reductions, the Backfire would be wholly offset. If the Soviets buy this, it will be in terms of Backfire and cruise missile running free and no reductions. I am lukewarm in support of Option II, but I am not bleeding for it.

President: Rumsfeld, Brown and those people don't understand. I agree with you.

Kissinger: The smart way would have been to pick up their points and build on them. If Reagan and Jackson get knocked out, the Soviets will be tougher.

President: I was so irritated last night that I was ready to junk the whole thing.

Kissinger: The cynicism of these people is sickening.



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President: How do you reconcile the DOD attitude with their screaming about the Soviets going all-out on Defense production? I think under the circumstances we have to go with this option. I am not optimistic but I think to go through the trauma it would take for Option II....

Kissinger: No, you can't do it. It is just that we must recognize that it isn't the best thing to do.

I am going to Latin America, as you know. I'm leaving at noon. I can't see anything dramatic. I will say on Panama only that we are negotiating. No qualitative comment.

President: I answered a question on Panama in Florida by saying we wouldn't sell out. It seemed to go okay.

Kissinger: The irony is the American people want tough talk about the Soviets, but they don't want to do anything about it.

We may have a breakthrough on Law of the Sea. The Brazilians have agreed to a formula which would enable private companies to mine the deep seabed.

Treasury is on board, but I don't know how much the right will complain about "socialist control of the seabed."

I am worried about China. Mao told you that Teng would be in for years. Either he has changed his mind or the situation has changed. It is a serious development.

[Discussion of the Nixon visit; press coverage; possibility of the Chinese plane being attached, etc.]



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