

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIC ARMS CONTROL AND THE US AIR FORCE: THE SALT ERA, 1969-1980

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This chapter reviews the role of the United States Air Force in making arms control policy during the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) era. It does this using a five-part approach, examining in turn the international strategic setting of the 1970s (reviewing and highlighting the previous chapter), the details of the strategic arms control agreements concluded during that decade, the competition between services over strategic acquisition programs, and the organization of the Air Force for arms control policy making. It then presents some themes regarding arms control and the Air Force during this period.

A note on methodology: Conducting historical research over a period some 30 years ago, particularly when dealing with issues of great sensitivity that were highly classified at the time, is a challenging exercise. One ends up looking for traces of evidence on the margins of the material rather than expecting to find direct evidence. For example, most books written on the SALT negotiations deal with strategic level issues, not organizational considerations. The US Department of State has published a comprehensive series of books detailing the history of American foreign policy since the beginning of the Republic, but so far it only covers the years through 1968. The Air Staff has not typically written unit histories, histories that might prove quite helpful if they existed. As a result, one resorts to first-hand accounts from interviews with participants of the era. But in many cases those memories and anecdotes are biased or faint, as most of the Air Force's leaders during the late 1960s and 1970s are now at least 75 years old.

SETTING THE STAGE: STRATEGIC DECISIONS AND PROGRAMS 1969-1980

Reviewing the historical background of the period clearly shows the close interrelationship between offensive forces, defensive concepts, acquisition programs, and arms control.

Lyndon Johnson was still President of the United States when our period of consideration began. During his final months in office the United States tested a new technology, multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), on both intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and

submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). A year later, under President Richard Nixon, the request for proposal was released for a new manned bomber—the B-1. The new president also announced his doctrine of strategic sufficiency and essential equivalence. Under these strategic guidelines the United States accepted the fact that the Soviet Union had achieved parity—that is, reached a level of strategic forces equivalent to those of the United States—and abandoned its previous strategy of superiority in nuclear arms and the means to deliver them. This opened a window for arms control as a method of controlling the continued growth of Soviet strategic forces, a vital necessity now that the United States had accepted essential equivalence and had few new programs of its own under development.

In 1970 the United States began deploying MIRVs on its existing Minuteman ICBM fleet. MIRVed warheads were seen as a technological “fix” for matching the growing levels of Soviet ICBM deployments, thereby maintaining parity without having to build more missiles. To the great surprise and consternation of American strategists, however, the Soviets began testing their own version of MIRVs in 1973.

In 1972 the United States and the USSR signed the SALT I treaty in Moscow, agreeing to limit future offensive forces and avoid defensive systems. That same year the United States promulgated National Security Decision Directive 242, which called for a strategy of proportional deterrence, flexible targeting, and a counterforce emphasis.¹ Both the Trident submarine/missile combination and the B-1 bomber were also approved for production in a package deal designed to show American strength despite signing the SALT I treaty.

Studies on the MX (missile experimental) ICBM began in 1973, as did the air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) program as part of America’s continuing qualitative improvements to its strategic forces. The first test flight of an air-launched Minuteman ICBM, as well as the first prototype B-1 test flight, took place in 1974, at about the same time that Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird was warning Congress of a growing Soviet first strike capability. This fear, coupled with a desire to rein in Soviet growth, led to a major breakthrough in the SALT II negotiations that fall, when President Gerald Ford met with Soviet Chairman Leonid Brezhnev in Vladivostok. Their summit agreement set the parameters for what would eventually become the SALT II treaty five years later.

President Jimmy Carter came to Washington in 1977 with a personal vision of achieving lasting arms control agreements with the Soviet Union and reducing the levels of strategic nuclear weapons in the US arsenal. He cancelled the B-1 bomber program, at which time the State Department and

the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) recommended that the United States move from a strategic Triad to a Dyad (with land- and sea-based missiles only).² At the same time, he continued the research and development programs under way for the ALCM (which had its first test flight in 1976, and held a fly-off competition in 1979), the MX missile (which went through multiple iterations of basing plans), and the Trident submarine (the first Ohio class boat was launched in 1979).

The SALT II treaty was signed by the United States and USSR in 1979. One year later, the president announced Presidential Decision 59 which changed US policy to a countervailing strategy—essentially the same as under Nixon, but with a new name. He also authorized the beginning of studies on the stealth bomber and advanced cruise missile.

Arms Control Negotiations and Treaties 1969-1980

These years proved to be a golden era for arms control, with a success rate (measured in terms of negotiations, agreements, and treaties) not seen again until the Cold War was ending, 1989-92. Half of the agreements during this period were the direct result of the SALT negotiations which began in Helsinki and Vienna in 1969. Those SALT-derived agreements are highlighted in bold in the table below.³

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Agreement</i> |
|-------------|---|
| 1969 | US unilateral ban on biological weapons and research |
| | SALT talks begin |
| 1971 | Seabed Treaty |
| | Nuclear War Risk Reduction Agreement |
| | Hot Line Modernization Agreement |
| | Zanger Committee created |
| 1972 | Biological Weapons Convention |
| | Prevention of Incidents at Sea Treaty |
| | Interim Offensive Agreement (SALT I Treaty) and ABM Treaty |
| | Special Consultative Commission established |
| 1973 | Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks begin |
| | Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement |

| | |
|------|--|
| | Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe talks begin |
| 1974 | Threshold Test Ban Treaty |
| | ABM Treaty Protocol |
| | Vladivostok Agreement |
| 1975 | Helsinki Accords |
| | NPT Review Conference |
| | US ratifies 1925 Geneva Convention on chemical and biological warfare |
| 1976 | Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty |
| | US Arms Control Export Act |
| | Chemical weapons talks begin |
| | Military services begin providing ACDA with annual arms control impact statements on strategic R&D programs |
| 1977 | Environmental Modification Treaty |
| | Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty talks begin |
| | Conventional Arms Transfer talks begin |
| | Indian Ocean arms limitation talks begin |
| 1978 | Camp David Accords |
| | US-Soviet anti-satellite talks begin |
| 1979 | SALT II Treaty |
| | NATO adopts dual track strategy on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) |
| 1980 | Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material |
| | Second NPT Review Conference |

SALT I NEGOTIATIONS AND TREATY DETAILS

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and Soviet Union began in November 1969, alternating between Helsinki and Vienna. The rationale for holding strategic negotiations at all has been summed up by Gerard Smith, the chief negotiator of SALT I. Both sides were reaching a level of strategic maturity, he suggests, and both sides recognized that large arsenals of nuclear weapons were a wasting asset. They also recognized that parity or sufficiency had been achieved. The

Soviets believed SALT was a way to prove that they were the political and military equal to the United States, thereby overcoming the embarrassment of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. In addition, President Nixon wanted to negotiate a zone of stability with the USSR (later called *détente*), and thought that SALT would serve the cause of nonproliferation by setting the example with limits between the superpowers.⁴

A US threat assessment conducted in 1969 drove a dual-track policy in the early 1970s of simultaneously pursuing arms control (leading to SALT and ABM) and new or accelerated strategic systems. President Nixon did not want to look “soft” on defense issues. Accordingly, Secretary of Defense Laird told the Senate in 1972 that he and the Joint Chiefs could only support the SALT treaty if Congress approved new strategic systems. This was, in effect, a *quid pro quo*: Pentagon opposition to arms control limitations and restrictions on its strategic forces would only be overcome by a new package of strategic systems. The rationale for these new programs involved matching Soviet R&D efforts, providing an incentive to the Soviets and bargaining leverage to the United States in future negotiations, and serving as a hedge in case SALT failed to yield results.⁵

The Treaty signed by President Nixon and Chairman Brezhnev in May 1972 in Moscow consisted of two major parts. The first, and the only part of the deal that was a legally binding international treaty, was the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, commonly known as the ABM Treaty. This was quickly ratified by the US Senate. It limited both parties to 100 ABM launchers at each of two sites (later changed to one site by the 1974 ABM Treaty Protocol), separated by 1300 kilometers and defending only the national capitals and one region of strategic value (such as an ICBM field). It also limited the ability of either side to pursue research and development efforts in ABM technology. The United States chose to locate its one ABM system at Grand Forks, North Dakota; the Soviets kept their operational site around Moscow.

The second part of the treaty was an Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. This was the heart of the SALT I treaty, but it was, in fact, an executive agreement that required no legislative concurrence during its five-year life. Both sides ostensibly expected it to be formalized in a follow-on SALT II treaty before the five years expired. The Interim Agreement limited the number of missile silos and submarine missile tubes to the levels each side maintained in the summer of 1972, and prevented either side from increasing its totals beyond those levels: 1054 land-based silos and 710 SLBMs for the United States, and 1618 and 740 respectively for the USSR. The treaty also restricted the total number of Soviet heavy ICBMs. The

United States was willing to accept this obvious numerical discrepancy between the two states because of its lead in MIRV technology, and because it wanted to stop further Soviet deployments. The treaty formalized the principle of verifying compliance using national technical means (optical, thermal, and electronic sensors on aircraft and satellites) and banned either side from deliberately interfering with the other's systems, or of attempting concealment. This proved to be a real milestone in arms control agreements that reverberates to this day.

US Air Force Role in SALT I

The US Air Force had little direct involvement in the SALT I negotiations. With no previous arms control experience upon which to base its policy, the Air Force was generally content to react to higher level guidance from the political leadership. The one key player was Major General Royal Allison, USAF, who represented the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the SALT negotiating team. But anecdotal evidence suggests that General Allison was not particularly liked within the senior officer corps, and that the Air Force may have sent him to the negotiations to “get rid of him.”⁶ Later he was considered disloyal to his service for having “given too much away” while serving as JCS representative to the SALT I negotiations.⁷ If the first part was true, this would certainly indicate the low level of concern granted the arms control process by the corporate Air Force in this first strategic session. And the second quote shows how dangerous an arms control assignment can be for one's career, which in turn may have deterred other bright officers from providing their expertise to this field.

In the early 1970s the Air Force was not organized with any thought given to the central role that arms control would take in the years ahead. What little thinking was being done on arms control issues took place in a couple of key offices. In 1971, for example, the Secretary of the Air Force had an office of Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs—a likely place, one would think, for arms control policy to be designed. But the Secretary was not involved in arms control during SALT.⁸ In fact, that office was eliminated the next year. Under the Chief of Staff (General John Ryan) Major General Glenn Kent was the Assistant Chief for Studies and Analysis from 1971-73, and Lt General George Eade was Deputy Chief for Plans and Operations. Most arms control-related issues fell within the purview of Plans and Operations. General Kent, called in one book a “maverick general,” was doing personal studies of strategic exchanges and the impact of arms control limits on force structure, but these were not officially Air Force-assigned tasks.⁹ According to General Kent, nobody

ever officially asked him for any studies to support Air Force positions on SALT I.¹⁰ Presumably there *were* some Air Force positions, but those were blended with the other services' desires at the Joint Staff level and presented to the OSD SALT committee as generic "uniformed military" inputs.

The bottom line, according to those who remember the SALT I years, was that the Air Force was uncertain what this new concept of arms control meant to them, and as such was not particularly involved in helping establish the US negotiating position. It was reactive, rather than proactive. The Air Force's only real interest seemed to be in protecting its force structure at the highest possible levels so it could support Strategic Air Command in achieving the Single Integrated Operations Plan.

In this regard the Air Force had the support of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and the Joint Chiefs. In 1972 they presented to Congress the quid pro quo of arms control: unless strategic modernization (in the form of the Trident submarine and the B-1 bomber) was approved, they could not support the SALT agreement. Not building these weapons, said Laird, would "raise the white flag of surrender" to the Soviets.¹¹ As the Chief SALT Negotiator at the time has written about the military's opposition to MIRV limits, "while the military generally supported the arms control process as represented by SALT, they drew the line at setting qualitative as opposed to quantitative limits on U.S. forces. They made this position clear within the bureaucracy early on."¹²

STRATEGIC ACQUISITION PROGRAMS OF INTEREST TO THE AIR FORCE IN THE 1970S

The United States was pursuing a number of strategic systems during the 1970s, most of which were of particular interest to the Air Force. We now review four of the largest and most contentious programs, in terms of arms control restrictions and limits.

The B-1 Bomber

The goal of the B-1 program was to develop a manned strategic bomber that could do everything: high and low altitude, supersonic and subsonic speeds, conventional and nuclear weapons. It first flew in 1974, but was cancelled by President Carter in 1977 when he selected B-52s with air-launched cruise missiles as the preferred future air delivery method.¹³ The program remained in minimal R&D status until it was restored by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. A 1976 Air Force Impact Statement submitted to ACDA said that the B-1 was simply force modernization, rather than a new

system, and as such was fully permitted under the SALT I Interim Agreement. SALT I did not limit bombers in any case, but the Air Force promised that the B-1 fleet would fall within the aggregate ceilings of the proposed SALT II.¹⁴

The MX Missile

Studies began on a follow-on ICBM for the Minuteman force in 1973. The MX program raced toward development in the 1970s because some believed it could serve as a bargaining chip in the SALT negotiations. This belief was held even among members of the Air Staff, although as the program developed the Air Force decided it wanted the MX and needed to protect it from arms control restrictions.¹⁵ The MX posed a real arms control dilemma: fixed silos would make verification easier, but also increased its vulnerability; a mobile MX, on the other hand, while having enhanced survivability, would create verification issues that might irreparably harm the SALT II process. The 1976 Air Force Impact Statement claimed that MX was consistent with SALT I, which allowed R&D and technological improvements to the missile force. It would also be designed to comply with SALT II limits and restrictions on weight, size, and sub-limit numbers.

The Air-Launched Cruise Missile

The ALCM program began in 1973, with a first air launch test in 1976. The Air Force had never much liked the concept of cruise missiles. They seemed to pose a threat to the organizational essence of the service by potentially eliminating the need for a manned bomber. Yet paradoxically the Air Force eventually came to accept and embrace ALCMs as one means of ensuring the survival of the bomber fleet, as a strategic stand-off delivery platform for ALCMs.¹⁶ This turnaround in Air Force interest in ALCMs came as a bit of a surprise to the political leadership. In January 1976, for example, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger went to Moscow for what was hoped would be the final negotiations leading to a SALT II agreement, but the talks were scuttled by Soviet opposition to the Pentagon's new-found love for cruise missiles.¹⁷ The 1976 Impact Statement to ACDA claimed that ALCMs were allowed under SALT I, and that while SALT II was actively considering ALCM limits, the missile development program would proceed anyway "with full cognizance of any agreement reached in SALT II." President Carter assured Congress that bombers armed with cruise missiles would not be considered MIRVed systems under SALT.¹⁸

Trident Submarines

A Navy program, the Trident was of considerable interest to the Air Force senior leadership because of its potential for usurping what they considered to be a role rightfully theirs: the delivery of strategic weapons to an enemy's homeland. At a minimum Trident's cost could negatively impact the ongoing Air Force programs outlined above. The first Ohio-class Trident boat was launched in 1979, seven years after the program was approved. In its 1976 Impact Statement to ACDA, the Navy pointed out that while modernized submarines were limited by the SALT I Interim Agreement, that agreement would expire in 1977, thereby making the Trident's first sea trials legal when they happened in 1979. Furthermore, SSBN limits would be included in the proposed SALT II aggregate ceiling.

SALT II NEGOTIATIONS AND TREATY DETAILS

Strategic arms limitations reached a high water mark in 1972 with the signing of SALT I. For several years the arms control process served as the focus and centerpiece of US-Soviet relations. By the end of the decade, however, arms control would find itself relegated to the political sidelines as political and technological trends led to the abandonment of SALT II. But we are getting ahead of our story.

Negotiations on a second SALT treaty to replace and formalize the Interim Agreement began almost immediately after SALT I was signed in November 1972. This time the venue for negotiations was Geneva. Negotiations got off to a slow start, however, as the Soviets appeared unmotivated to continue the SALT process and the United States administration was distracted by the Watergate scandal and the final years of the Vietnam War.¹⁹ It took seven long years of arduous debate to reach an agreement, but the SALT II Treaty was finally signed in June 1979 by President Carter and Chairman Brezhnev. The final treaty was based closely on an agreed framework signed by President Ford and Brezhnev in 1974 during their Vladivostok summit and affirmed at a 1977 meeting between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Ambassador Andrei Gromyko in Washington.

The SALT II Treaty limited strategic delivery vehicles. It included sub-limits on various system types. The Treaty was never ratified by the US Senate. After heated debate in late 1979 that raised questions over whether it could ever be ratified, Carter withdrew the treaty from consideration in January 1980 to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But there were

additional factors that suggested difficulties in achieving Senate confirmation: technical issues and verification problems; differing definitions of détente given Soviet adventurism in Africa; growing US ICBM vulnerability as a result of Soviet military growth during the 1970s; and the fact that the US administration was distracted from arms control issues by the Iranian hostage crisis.²⁰ Nevertheless, both sides continued to abide by the Treaty limits through reciprocal unilateral statements until 1986, when the strategic build-up under President Reagan surpassed one of the warhead sublimits.

The SALT II Treaty created an overall ceiling for strategic delivery systems and sublimits on specific delivery types. The overall ceiling was 2400 delivery systems (to be reduced to 2250 within a couple of years). There were several nested sublimits: 1320 total MIRVed ICBMs, SLBMs, and cruise missile carrying bombers; 1200 ICBMs and SLBMs; 820 ICBMs. These sublimits gave some flexibility to each side as to how they would structure their forces. One new type of ICBM was allowed, with a maximum of 10 MIRVed warheads; the counting would be based on the maximum number of warheads tested for each missile type. No new heavy ICBMs were allowed. New SLBMs were limited to 14 MIRVed warheads. The Soviet heavy SS-18 was limited to 10 MIRVed warheads. The maximum number of ALCMs allowed on a bomber was 20. No new missile silos could be built. The treaty would be in force through 1985, and national technical means were still considered sacrosanct for verification of the other side's compliance with the treaty provisions. Encryption of test results was banned to enhance verification. Both sides agreed to contribute to a data base that would be kept at the Standing Consultative Committee (SCC) and updated regularly. Finally, the two parties issued a joint statement that they were deferring several difficult questions involving mobile systems, cruise missile ranges, and future force reductions.²¹

US Air Force Role in SALT II

The Air Force was considerably more involved in SALT II than it was in SALT I. By the mid-1970s Headquarters USAF had established an office that dealt with arms control related issues. In 1976 the Director of Air Force Studies and Analysis (AFSAA) was Maj General Jasper Welch. Though sometimes at the request of XO, the only organization doing any significant studies on arms control related issues was AFSAA. These included reviews of missile throw-weight, the effect of arms control limits on first-strike survivability, the impact on US forces of Soviet MIRVs, MX basing options, and so on.²²

In 1978 the Air Staff underwent a major reorganization.²³ General Lew Allen replaced David Jones as Chief of Staff; Jones moved on to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. For a few months he held both posts simultaneously, during which time one of his staff officers for arms control remembers receiving Air Staff papers on SALT and handing them directly to General Jones for his consideration. Jones believed he was representing the Air Force when he made a decision or took a position as CJCS.²⁴ The new Air Staff organization included a DCS for Programs and Analysis, beneath which sat General Welch's Concepts and Analysis office. In mid-1978 the Executive Secretary of the SALT delegation was replaced on an interim basis by Air Force Maj General John Ralph; at the same time, the deputy commissioner of the US component of the Special Consultative Commission was Air Force Brig General Harry Goodall.²⁵ Within XO there was a small office dealing with International Affairs (AF/XOXXI, the forerunner of today's AF/XONP), headed up by Colonel Frank Jenkins, which dealt with arms control matters. According to Jenkins, there were only three officers in his shop authorized to see the compartmentalized SALT papers; one of those was Major (future General and CINCSAC) Lee Butler.²⁶ Within the Chief's staff group Lt Colonel (future Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy) Ted Warner handled SALT papers and issues for General Allen.

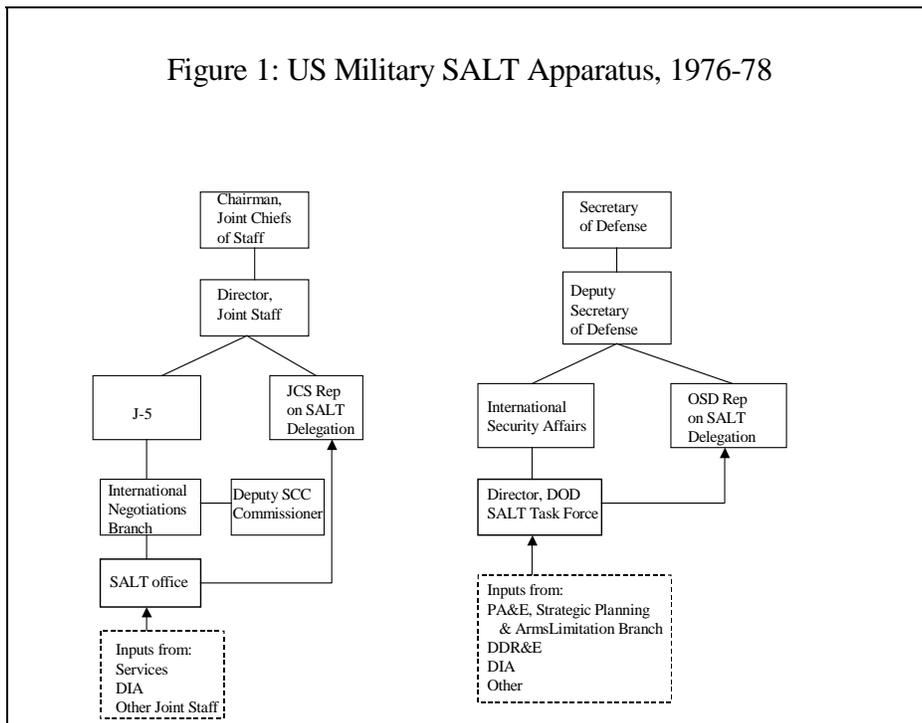
The Joint Chiefs of Staff realized that they had to walk a fine line when dealing with the military services. It used the offices of J-5 (and later, during the START era, the newly created J-8) to develop trusting relationships with the services, including the Air Force, by conducting studies such as military sufficiency analyses with service inputs. This allowed the JCS staff to create better rapport with its service counterparts, which in turn led to closer agreement in other arenas, including arms control negotiating positions.²⁷

In the final SALT year, 1979, the Air Staff made a few additional minor organizational changes. Studies and Analysis, still under the direction of General Welch, was restored to its former level of Assistant to the Chief of Staff, thus symbolically elevating the importance of arms control within the Air Staff.

The military SALT apparatus was two sided, as Figure 1 shows.²⁸ "Pentagon" policy was developed in parallel by the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. Air Force inputs nominally went up the chain through the JCS and eventually became JCS inputs to its representative on the negotiating team. But this was just one of many such representatives, and the Chief Negotiator had multiple such inputs to consider as he developed America's position in the talks. During SALT I the JCS focal point for arms

control, the SALT office, reported directly to the Chairman. But after 1973 that office was moved to the J-5 Directorate, where its voice was muted by the time it got to the Chairman. Examples of personnel in these offices include Paul Nitze, who was the OSD representative to the SALT Delegation during the Nixon years, Michael May, who replaced him under President Ford, and Walter Slocombe during the Carter presidency. Major General Allison, USAF, held the JCS representative's slot for SALT I, and Lt General Edward Rowney, US Army, during SALT II.²⁹ Air Force Brig General William Georgi served as the chief of the international negotiations branch of J5 from 1972-75. That position was again held by the Air Force when Brig General Harry Goodall took over in April 1978.³⁰

Figure 1: US Military SALT Apparatus, 1976-78



Rather than providing a united Pentagon front to the interagency process, occasionally the two views that came out of these parallel processes were at odds with one another, particularly during SALT I when the process shown in Figure 1 was still under development. The establishment of the formal approach shown above did dampen such differences during the SALT II negotiations.³¹

According to Air Force Lt General Brent Scowcroft, who served as National Security Advisor to President Gerald Ford, it was hard to separate the Air Force's position from the consolidated Department of Defense position that he saw when it came to the White House. As an example, he relates that the two key issues that took up most of his time during his tenure in the National Security Council involved the role of cruise missiles and the Soviet Backfire bomber. Despite the amount of time he spent on these military topics, he had no idea what the corporate Air Force thought of either one of them.³²

Given renewed fears of Soviet capabilities and attitudes in the late 1970s, as evidenced by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, several strategic systems were saved from extermination in the early 1980s under Presidents Carter and Reagan. These included the MX and the B-1, which returned from purgatory to full development, and the beginnings of two new stealth programs that would eventually lead to the B-2 bomber and advanced cruise missile. Even General David Jones, who supported the SALT concept in general and President Jimmy Carter's agenda in particular, expressed "deep reservations" about supporting SALT without a mobile MX system.³³ Arms control also became more important during the Reagan years as a counter to the arms buildup; as such, the role of arms control policy making within the Air Staff grew, as did the number of trusted agents.³⁴

ARMS CONTROL AND THE US AIR FORCE: THEMES FROM THE SALT ERA

Most observers of the SALT era believe that to the Air Force arms control did not involve an arms control process, per se—rather, it was a process of protecting the Air Force *from* arms control. That attitude underlies most of the themes that follow as we analyze how the Air Force reacted to the new concept of negotiated arms limitations, and then adapted to the realization that it needed to be more proactive in the process that was developing despite its wishes.

SALT I was a new game. The SALT process that began in the late 1960s seems to have caught the Air Force off guard. There was little corporate Air Force involvement in SALT I, and what little there was took place at the highest levels, behind tight security and with a close-hold mentality regarding the positions that were developed. Since SALT I did not address strategic bombers, and since ICBM deployments had been halted by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in the mid-1960s, the Air Force had little concern or interest in the negotiations. Certain individuals

were interested in the process and doing personal studies, but there was little corporate attention given to SALT.

SALT II included a broader cast of characters. With SALT I completed, and SALT II taking a more comprehensive approach to strategic systems, the Air Force became more interested and involved. The process was still compartmentalized, close-hold, and involved only a few trusted agents on the Air Staff, but the planning and policy papers were being developed at a deeper level within the Air Force bureaucracy than was the case in SALT I. The work done in XOXI, for example, was accomplished by the three approved “SALTers” who dealt directly with the Chief of Staff; there were no two or three star intermediaries unless they were personally approved by the Chief as trusted agents.³⁵ The process fell outside of the normal staff officer chain of command. The Chief’s staff group also had a key role in developing the Air Force position on SALT issues. The final “Air Force” position was personally made by the Chief of Staff, with inputs from a small group of advisors. Both General Jones and General Allen believed that SALT II was the right thing for the country to do, so the Air Force officially supported the negotiations and treaty outcomes, despite a widespread concern with arms control among the officer corps.³⁶

The Air Force’s goal in both negotiations was to protect the existing and planned force structure. “Protect ours, limit theirs” went the mantra. The Air Force seemed to go along for the ride when it came to arms control, never taking the lead within the interagency process, or even within JCS, on SALT I or II. As one participant from the era put it, “The Air Force only got involved when it had an ox about to be gored.”³⁷ The corporate position was to prevent any agreement that impinged on the Air Force’s ability to fight or deter—which meant most arms control deals. It also wanted to protect its share of the strategic Triad, and keep those capabilities from moving into the Navy’s hands.

The Air Force was juggling multiple concerns, of which arms control was just one. Echoing the previous theme, the Air Staff was indeed busy during this period. It was trying to keep enough MIRVs for the ICBM force and develop the B-1 bomber, and to protect MX basing plans. The Air Force always wanted a new heavy bomber and land-based ICBMs, so it was willing to fight to protect those against either enemy—arms control negotiations or the US Navy. This meant occasionally going against the political desires of the JCS and higher levels, some of whom wanted to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union despite any Air Force concerns or position.

The Air Force worked the unofficial interagency process more than it does today to protect its systems. Otherwise known as “lobbying,”

whether legal or not, this was commonly done in the 1970s. The military services are not directly involved in the interagency policy making process. Their inputs are supposed to be incorporated into a common Defense Department position. But that often means that the Air Force's specific concerns are lost or watered down to the point of inconsequence. As a result, for example, in order to protect the MX missile during SALT II, senior Air Force leaders held regular informative meetings with Congressional members, National Security Council staffers, ACDA, and the State Department. These were all quiet, behind-the-scenes get-togethers. Such meetings allowed the Air Force to get its positions considered via back doors to these agencies, rather than solely through a consensual compromise JCS joint position paper.³⁸ Such a system requires senior officers who understand how the process can work and are willing to allow their staffs to do this sort of outreach.³⁹

There was no coordinated Air Force input to the arms control process in the 1970s. Particularly during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Air Force did not fight very strongly for its beliefs, because it had not identified what those beliefs or equities were. There was no real policy focus within the Air Staff that could effectively deal with such issues, and no section or division within the Air Staff devoted to arms control.⁴⁰ The responsibility for dealing with arms control fell within the strategic planning or acquisition directorates, rather than programs or operations. As a result, the Air Force's inputs to the JCS were "not all that important," according to a former Executive Officer to a JCS Chairman—at a time when both were Air Force general officers.⁴¹ And this was during SALT II, when the Air Force was more motivated than it had been in SALT I, yet it still did not have an organized process to get its core interests in front of the negotiating team. Instead, whatever papers it wrote ended up going through the Joint process and lost whatever service specific focus they may have had. The Air Force ended up reacting to arms control initiatives, rather than developing them. According to another participant, the Air Force's attitude seemed to be characterized by the belief that "we've got enough to worry about without worrying about arms control, too—it may be important, but it's not our job; let someone else think about that and we'll accept the decisions and then react to them at a later time."⁴² Or as one participant put it, in those days the attitude was that "real men don't eat quiche—or do arms control."⁴³

Air Force arms control policy was developed by a small group of analysts reporting to the Chief of Staff. The nexus of arms control thinking and policy development in the 1970s can be located in a few specific offices. These included:

- Air Force Studies and Analysis (AFSAA)
- Air Force International Affairs (AF/XOXXI)
- Air Force Concepts (AF/XOC)
- Air Force Intelligence (AF/IN)
- Air Force Chief of Staff's Staff Group
- (sometimes) Air Force research, development, and engineering (DDRE), and acquisition (AF/AQ)

The Secretary of the Air Force had little involvement in arms control matters, preferring to leave those to the JCS and OSD.⁴⁴ Nor was Strategic Air Command involved in the SALT years. It left the studies and negotiations to the Joint Chiefs, and in the late 1970s, at least, CINCSAC was receiving quarterly update briefings from XOXXI. SAC simply wanted to have enough bombers and missiles to accomplish the SIOP; it didn't have to worry directly about acquiring those forces—that was the service's responsibility. The Air Force recognized those needs and agreed with them, so it took the lead (such as it was) for SAC in the arms control realm. As Forrest Waller points out in Chapter 7, that role changed dramatically during the START talks in the 1980s, as SAC became much more invigorated and involved in the development of American arms control policy.

CONCLUSION

The Air Force role in arms control policy development grew during the 1970s along with its enhanced recognition of the importance of that process and the potential consequences of a reactive posture. Whereas there was very little involvement by the corporate Air Force during SALT I negotiations, and that only at the very highest levels, by START II the increasingly widespread role for Air Staff officers hinted at the degree to which the Air Force would eventually make arms control policy development, negotiating strategy, and treaty implementation a central focus of its operations. But that perspective was still to come in the late 1960s and 1970s when the organization found itself facing a new “enemy:” political leaders of its own country who were voluntarily negotiating away Air Force strategic forces in a conference room in Europe. The Air Force's strategic culture, its view of self, had difficulty accepting that premise, and it took years before coming to grips with it and establishing the necessary structure to best deal with this new process.

NOTES

- ¹ Fen Osler Hampson, *Unguided Missiles: How America Buys its Weapons* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 118-119.
- ² *Ibid.*, 170.
- ³ For more on these treaties, see Jeffrey A. Larsen and James M. Smith, *Historical Dictionary of Arms Control and Disarmament* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, forthcoming); also Gerard C. Smith, *Disarming Diplomat: The Memoirs of Gerard C. Smith, Arms Control Negotiator* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1996), 174-175.
- ⁴ Smith., 150-152
- ⁵ Hampson, 292; also Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).
- ⁶ Interview with Maj General (ret.) Glenn Kent, Arlington, VA, 14 June 2001.
- ⁷ Interview with Colonel (ret.) Frank Dellerman, The Pentagon, 13 June 2001.
- ⁸ Multiple interviews, June 2001.
- ⁹ Hampson. An example of these studies can be found in a paper published after General Kent retired. See Glenn A. Kent with Randall J. DeValck and Edward L. Warner III, *A New Approach to Arms Control* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, June 1984).
- ¹⁰ Kent interview. General Kent did do special studies on alternative missile limit scenarios for Paul Nitze, but in doing these he was not representing the Air Force. General Kent admits that his primary agenda as director of AFSAA during SALT I was to point out that arms control was wrong if it limited the number of ICBM launchers but not the size of the missiles.
- ¹¹ Nick Kotz, *Wild Blue Yonder: Money, Politics, and the B-1 Bomber* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 105.
- ¹² Smith, 167.
- ¹³ Kotz.
- ¹⁴ Excerpted in *Arms Control Today*, late 1976.
- ¹⁵ Hampson and interview with Colonel (ret.) Ken Van Dillen, McLean, VA, 12 June 2001.
- ¹⁶ Hampson, 180, and Kotz, 163. For more on the concept of organizational essence, see Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1974).
- ¹⁷ Telephone interview with Lt General (ret.) Brent Scowcroft, Washington DC, 3 August 2001.
- ¹⁸ Hampson, 192.
- ¹⁹ Thomas W. Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing, 1979).
- ²⁰ Smith, Talbott.
- ²¹ Treaty details from *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements* (Washington, DC: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1996).
- ²² Interview with Colonel (ret.) Frank Jenkins, McLean, VA, 12 June 2001.

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- ²³ “Highlights of USAF Departmental Headquarters Realignments,” *Air Force Magazine*, June 1978, 32-33.
- ²⁴ Interview with Colonel (ret.) Michael Wheeler, McLean, VA, 12 June 2001.
- ²⁵ Names from Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, 307-309 notes, and interviews June 2001.
- ²⁶ Jenkins interview.
- ²⁷ Wheeler interview.
- ²⁸ Chart recreated from Wolfe, Chapter 2, “Institutional Setting of the SALT Process: The U.S. Side,” p. 41. It is representative of how the process was organized within the Defense Department in the later SALT period. Notice how small the Air Force input appears—it is lumped under “Service Inputs” in the bottom box on the JCS side.
- ²⁹ Wolfe, 306. Interviews with participants of that period pointed out that General Rowney’s reputation among those who worked with him during SALT II was much like General Allison’s in SALT I: poor.
- ³⁰ Wolfe, 35.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.
- ³² Scowcroft interview.
- ³³ Hampson, 127.
- ³⁴ Wheeler interview.
- ³⁵ Jenkins interview. Later, of course, that situation changed. As the corporate Air Force became more interested and involved with the development of US arms control policy in the 1980s, more of the intermediate three-star directors became engrossed in the details of arms control, as well.
- ³⁶ Interview with Lt Colonel (ret.) Ted Warner, Arlington, VA, 14 June 2001.
- ³⁷ Kent interview.
- ³⁸ A good example of this type of lobbying can be found in the discussion over General James McCarthy’s role in persuading Congressmen of the B-1’s value to their districts in Kotz, *Wild Blue Yonder*, 20-22.
- ³⁹ Jenkins interview.
- ⁴⁰ Kent interview. Others interviewed for this chapter believed that there “must have been” some process or paper flow up through AF/XO to the JCS for SALT I, but no one could recall any specifics that would verify that process until XOXI was created in the early 1970s for SALT II.
- ⁴¹ Interview with Maj General (ret.) Pete Todd, Colorado Springs, CO, 6 June 2001.
- ⁴² Warner interview.
- ⁴³ Dellerman interview.
- ⁴⁴ Multiple interviews, including Warner and Todd.