


MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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(BYE-110069/76)

INFORMATION
July 24, 1976


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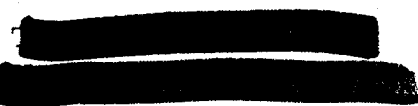
MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT 
SUBJECT: U. S. Anti-Satellite Capability

In approving the NSDM on protecting U. S. satellites, you requested further comments on the status and prospects for a U. S. anti-satellite capability.

The U. S. has not had an operational anti-satellite capability for several years and, under current plans, will not for some time in the future. The nuclear anti-satellite system we maintained on Johnson Island in the Pacific was phased out in 1974. Some limited R&D has been pursued on a non-nuclear anti-satellite interceptor; however, this effort has received little emphasis in the past. DOD now plans some increase in funding for this area, leading to an experimental test in the early 1980s and a possible limited operational capability in the mid-1980s.

The NSC technical consultants panel which had earlier submitted an interim report on satellite survivability issues has now provided a second Interim Report (Tab A) summarizing their preliminary findings with respect to a U. S. anti-satellite capability.

The Panel concluded that space assets are now playing a key role in determining the effectiveness and capabilities of important elements of the military forces of both the U. S. and the Soviets. The Panel believes that, as a matter of national policy, the U. S. should not allow the Soviets an exclusive sanctuary in space. The U. S. should acquire the option of selectively neutralizing militarily important Soviet space capabilities. The need for such a U. S. anti-satellite capability is related to its military value and is not directly related to the Soviet anti-satellite program. The Panel identified several technical options for achieving such a capability, including electronic attack as well as physical attack. These preliminary conclusions are discussed in more detail in the Interim Report at Tab A.


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At present the U. S. anti-satellite program is not receiving emphasis because, in part, there is no national policy to develop an anti-satellite capability. The lack of a policy decision has been related to:

- Our perception (now seen as incorrect) that the Soviets were not aggressively pursuing an anti-satellite system;
- a concern that preparation for satellite interception would be contrary to the spirit if not the letter of the SALT protection of "national technical means," and;
- a view that it would not be in our interest to stimulate satellite interception since we are more dependent on intelligence from space sources and would have more to lose.

The fact of the Soviet intercept tests alters these perceptions and the strategic and political policies connected with the possible development and deployment of a U. S. anti-satellite capability need to be reexamined.

The NSC consultants panel is accelerating its work and will have more specific recommendations in its Final Report, which I hope to have by September. I will forward specific recommendations for action at that time.

Attachment:

Tab A -- NSC Space Panel Interim Report
(Ltr dtd 7/16/76 fm Buchsbaum)

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