

~~SECRET~~

DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

DDR&E Control
76-121



14 JAN 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Shutdown of Minuteman III Guidance System Production

Last Friday I expressed concern to you at the planned termination of Minuteman III production -- particularly the guidance system (NS-20). The reason for my concern is that it takes years to develop and evolve production capability with the required reliability and this action would leave a void until a similar reliable production capability is developed (requiring possibly many years) for the Advanced Inertial Reference System (AIRS) for M-X..

Minuteman

I believe that there is a logical way out of this situation which will also help us solve another problem.

In particular, as we plan to go forward with the M-X program its rationale based (a) on survivability and (b) on its greater number of RVs which maximize the retaliatory effect of our residual ICBM force after taking a first strike/, we are not yet satisfactorily addressing the problem of Minuteman II. I believe that any credible long range program must provide a plan for Minuteman II including at least:

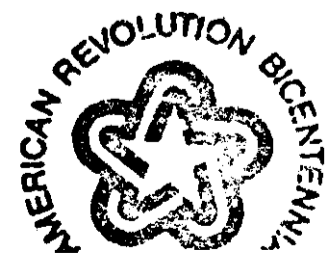
1. Upgrading its guidance system which is not x-ray hardened.
2. Substituting new rocket motors eventually (the current ones are getting old and some are showing signs of cracking and case separation).

14 Jan 76

Now, if we keep the MMIII guidance production line going at a modest level (costing roughly \$50 million per year) we could accomplish the following:

A. By substituting them for the present guidance units in MM II we would eliminate the x-ray vulnerability and roughly double the accuracy of MM II (and therefore increase its hard-target capability).

Classified by DDP/TE
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED
AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS DECLASSIFIED ON 10-31-1997



B. We would maintain continuity and therefore our basic production capability as a hedge during the time AIRS is being fully developed and transitioned into production.

C. We would provide an alternative to AIRS for M-X (almost as good, considerably cheaper) as well as create valid competition to keep AIRS contractors honest.

Our only other alternatives to fixing the MM II problem are (a) wait until M-X begins to replace MM III and then use those guidance units and boosters to substitute into MM II (many years away) or (b) develop a new substitute for MM II. Neither of these alternatives appear to be attractive solutions in my view.

RECOMMENDATION: As soon as possible (before we go to Congress) I believe we should re-examine our position both with respect to terminating MM III guidance and rocket motor production as well as laying out an overall long-range plan for our entire land-based ICBM force. Anything short of this should be viewed by both Congress and ourselves as incomplete and inadequate.



Malcolm R. Currie

Approved _____

Other _____

Date _____

