

SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

JULY 14, 1983

Mr. President, I am proud to join my colleague from Colorado in a debate of the most controversial weapons system of modern times - the MX missile. It is fully correct and prudent to engage the undivided attention of the U.S. Senate on the MX program.

The MX is much more than the innocuous sounding "strategic modernization" program its advocates lay claim to. It represents an escalation of serious proportions, a commitment in U.S. dollars and technology which will lead to outcomes I don't believe the Senate fully appreciates. We must debate this issue; we must explore its implications and its necessities; we must step away from the fusillade of special interests and lobbying groups and truly contemplate in the finest tradition of the Senate, what it is we are being asked to do.

This is an enormous task, both in scope of the data and the depth of analysis. Each of us, I think, brings their own special perspective to this debate, and I have listened with great interest to the presentations of my colleagues on both sides of this question. I will not duplicate their remarks - my purpose today is to explore what has come to be known - for good or for worse - as the "bargaining chip theory" of the MX missile.

My views on the MX program have had a long evolution, matching the ancient origins - 1973 - of this missile. At first the missile was justified as a modernization of the Minuteman, but that was quickly replaced by the so-called window of vulnerability. I then heard from an array of experts who carefully set out for me the steady growth of counterforce ICBM's in the Soviet arsenal. By 1979, when I assembled a 25-member group of defense advisors from Massachusetts, the "window" was described as about to open. Each year thereafter I was informed of the new increments which were bringing our ICBM's to

a theoretical if not actual, vulnerability to the new breed of Soviet ICBM's, the SS-19's and 18's. In 1980 candidate Ronald Reagan formally opened the window to its full extent declaring for all our vulnerability and, without much thought at all, our strategic inferiority.

The MX was, of course, to be the answer to this problem. The MX would be deployed in such a way that it could survive an all out Soviet first strike, thereby repairing the large gash in our fabric of deterrence. I adopted a position of support for MX research and development, subject to a satisfactory basing mode.

The basing mode, as we all know, was a problem as soon as the MX was conceived. Presidents Ford, Carter, and now Reagan have proposed an astounding number of schemes, each of which lacked credibility in one crucial dimension or another, and each of which added to the growing skepticism of the missile's value among experts and laymen alike.

SALT II, negotiated by three presidents, seemed to hold the possibility of a solution to the window of vulnerability. By virtue of the ceilings it placed on the Soviet missile force, it seemed possible to build a deceptive, mobile basing mode which Soviet warheads, under SALT II limits, would be unable to overcome. I vigorously supported SALT II, and at that time I could visualize my support for deploying the MX with SALT II ratified.

That vision of strategic harmony did not survive Jimmy Carter's presidency. Candidate Reagan and others saw their way clear to attack SALT II and ultimately defeat the treaty. This was justified as some sort of shock therapy to a nation grown tranquilized by arms control. The Soviet threat, the critics reasoned, was so dangerous that only an arms race would stop them. SALT II with all those complicated limits, sublimits, and definitions deserved burial in a diplomatic cemetery. "Let the build-up begin" - that was the sentiment and the battle cry. SALT II did not survive that attack.

It was a great victory for those conservatives opposing arms control, but it also took the baby with the bath water. Suddenly, there was no arms control

cradle for the MX. No limits on Soviet missiles, no limits on warhead fractionation, no ratified SALT II. How then was the MX to stand alone? How then to close the window of vulnerability? How then to justify 20 to 30 billion dollars worth of missiles of which there was no available home? That was when my patience with the MX began to wear thin.

And that was when now President Reagan began his rhetorical campaign against the Soviet Union, against the Nuclear Freeze, for limited nuclear war, and for U.S. nuclear superiority. Gen. Ed Rowny was his choice to negotiate with the Soviets in Geneva. Al Haig launched hypothetical nuclear warning shots in Europe and arms control stood still. But not the MX.

In October of 1981 the President canceled the Carter plan for multiple Protective Shelter basing and recommended an interim basing plan for 40 MX missiles in super-hardened existing silos. That proposal antagonized nearly everyone, including the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and was doomed from the start.

A year later in November 1982, the President announced a second plan - the so-called dense pack configuration by which 100 MX missiles would be deployed in a closely spaced basing mode at Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming.

Dense pack did not survive the year. Congress stopped procurement subject to its approval of a new permanent basing mode. The President appointed the Scowcroft Commission to bail him out of his MX dilemma. The Commission's recommendation for basing 100 MX missiles in old minuteman silos is now before us.

And lo, behold the window of vulnerability is gone, evaporated, vaporized. General Scowcroft and his distinguished bipartisan panel of experts have simply asserted that it does not exist. In its place, sit 100 MX missiles and an unratified arms control treaty.

This has been a lengthy introduction to the announced subject of my statement, the "bargaining chip theory" of the MX missile, but it is pertinent.

The history of the MX is inextricably joined with the history of arms control. Different in this respect from other large systems, the fragile consensus for the MX has rested in large part on an assurance - namely that the missile was not the opening round in a new strategic arms race, but the closing of an asymmetry in the two superpower arsenals. And once this asymmetry was resolved through a combination of deployment and arms control negotiations, the arms race spiral would be contained. In this way MX would be part and parcel of an integrated approach to our strategic security, a carefully negotiated framework of stability and peace. Or so the story went. Certainly events did not. And now we must deal with the MX under a new host of arms control uncertainties.

Given the new awareness of nuclear war and the anguish among millions of our people that nuclear weapons directly causes, we can no longer look at "strategic modernization" as a dry technical alteration in our "force structure." The Western World is in the midst of an upheaval of popular concern. What might have happened ten years ago - a new nuclear weapon built and deployed without a whisper of dissent - is simply unimaginable now. I am thinking of how MIRVing of our ICBM's, a truly significant escalation, occurred without any major expression of popular opposition. And given the MX and its promise of new strategic instabilities built into a heavily counterforce missile structure, even the experts must pause and consider the perils of new nuclear weapons outside of and unconstrained by effective arms control. We are on the brink of a new era in nuclear weaponry, and in my view, and perhaps the Scowcroft Commission's view, we cannot proceed without an aggressive, imaginative negotiating posture. Arms control is of the essence - it is absolutely central to our security and to the future of the MX.

I don't think the President has absorbed this reality just yet. Many around him have, many here in Congress have but his perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet competition do not accommodate arms control easily. His view of the Soviet Union and its people, seem grounded in visions of monolithic national character overlain by a brutal almost inhuman ideology.

These images are only correct at the widest, and the simplest, levels of generalization. The Soviet state and its leadership are capable of nuance, flexibility, and negotiation, albeit in pursuit of interests often hostile to the U.S., but nonetheless the capability is there. It has been demonstrated.

Let us return to the MX and arms control. There is obviously a credibility problem here. The President has asked for the MX to help him pry an agreement from the Soviets in Geneva. He and others in his Administration claim they need the MX as a bargaining chip or in their words "leverage" with the Soviets to reach an agreement. The implication is that, in Secretary Shultz's words, "everything is on the table" in Geneva. The MX, like our ABM system of 1972, would be used as a true chip to gain an agreement precluding a new round in the nuclear arms race. That is what I and others in this body were asked to believe.

This brings us to the Scowcroft Commission and its findings. For it is on that foundation of expert consensus that the President makes his case for the MX and arms control. The Commission recommended deploying 100 MX missiles in Minuteman silos; it also called for vigorous strategic arms control efforts; and it selected a small single warhead missile as the logical follow-on to the MX, both for deterrence and arms control reasons. I want to go into this Report in some detail on two issues - ICBM vulnerability and the MX as a bargaining chip.

The Report selected an MX option long favored by some strategic planners - deploy them in existing silos. These planners have for their own reasons concluded that ICBM vulnerability has been over stated due to the enormous uncertainties of a first strike strategy faced by Soviet strategists. The theoretical accuracies of the SS-18 and 19, according to this line of thinking, are far enough removed from an actual, reliable capability that we need not restructure our ICBM force to counter it. Yet the asymmetry in land based forces exists and must be dealt with. The reasons are essentially political and psychological. The asymmetry may lead other powers to believe the Soviets are stronger; it may affect our own decision making in a crisis; and an unresolved asymmetry suggests a weakening of national will.

The Scowcroft Commission did not take that precise tack. It would have been, I am afraid, too large of a fig leaf to remove. So instead of dismantling the myth of Soviet ICBM accuracy, the Commission identified scenarios in which the MX would survive a Soviet attack and retaliate. In other words, they said the MX is survivable in spite of Soviet ICBM accuracy. The scenario goes like this and I quote:

"For example, if Soviet war planners should decide to attack our bomber and submarine bases and our ICBM silos with simultaneous detonations - by delaying missile launches from close-in submarines so that such missiles would arrive at our bomber bases at the same time the Soviet ICBM warheads (with their longer time of flight) would arrive at our ICBM silos - then a very high proportion of our alert bombers would have escaped before their bases were struck. This is because we would have been able to, and would have, ordered our bombers to take off from their bases within moments after the launch of the first Soviet ICBM's. If the Soviets, on the other hand, chose rather to launch their ICBM and SLBM attacks at the same moment (hoping to destroy a higher proportion of our bombers with SLBM's having a short time of flight), there would be a period of over a quarter of an hour after nuclear detonations had occurred on U.S. bomber bases but before our ICBM's had been struck. In such a case the Soviets should have no confidence that we would refrain from launching our ICBM's during that interval after we had been hit. It is important to appreciate that this would not be a "launch-on-warning," or even a "launch under attack," but rather a launch after attack - after massive nuclear detonations had already occurred on U.S. soil.

"Thus our bombers and ICBM's are more survivable together against Soviet attack than either would be alone. This illustrates that the different components of our strategic forces should be assessed collectively and not in isolation. It also suggests that whereas it is highly desirable that a component of the strategic forces be survivable when it is viewed separately, it makes a major

contribution to deterrence even if its survivability depends in substantial measure on the existence of one of the other components of the force."

Later in the Report, the Commission concludes that ICBM vulnerability is "not a sufficiently dominant part of the overall problem of ICBM modernization..." making ABM or dense packs basing unnecessary. The reason cited for this conclusion is, and I quote:

"This is because of the mutual survivability shared by the ICBM force and the bomber force in view of the different types of attacks that would need to be launched at each, as explained above (Section IV.A.)"

In other words, no matter how the Soviets might attack our bomber bases and our ICBM's, they would give the game away and allow us time to use either our bombers or our ICBM's before they were hit by Soviet missiles.

This is a curious and tortured logic to justify a \$26 billion investment. First of all, the Commission concedes in a foot note that "an attack in which thousands of warheads were targeted on our ICBM fields but there were no early detonations on our bomber bases from attack by Soviet submarines" would destroy all our ICBM force, MX and Minuteman.

Secondly, this logic applies to any U.S. land based missile, not exclusively the MX. The Minuteman would be just as survivable under these scenarios as the MX. For many years MX proponents have been saying that our existing ICBM's would be vulnerable to an all out Soviet attack. The MX in a survivable basing mode was proposed to counter that vulnerability. We have always known that our bombers would have sufficient warning to take off from their bases and therefore survive such an attack. That argument was never invoked to justify MX, because it couldn't.

To say that either our bombers or our ICBM's could survive a Soviet attack merely restated a truism - that ICBM's based on land are a valuable leg of the triad and a crucial complement to our bomber force.

I accept that, most experts accept that, and of course the Commission accepts it. But that argument alone does not justify MX. Nor for that matter does it address the issue of Soviet ICBM accuracy and the theoretical vulnerability of our Minuteman force. It simply skirts it by redefining vulnerability - as a bomber/ICBM problem, as opposed to a strictly ICBM problem.

So the question becomes, why do we need 100, ten warhead, 200,000 pound, highly accurate replacement missiles for 100 Minutemen? The Commission sets out its rationale. I submit that the rationale is overwhelming political and perceptual, which will take us directly to my subject - the bargaining chip theory of the MX missile.

The Commission argues that we must demonstrate to the Soviets "national will and cohesion" by deploying the MX. Secondly, we must "assure our allies that we have the capability and will stand with them." Thirdly, our Minuteman force is not new and will need rehabilitation. Fourth, we need a big payload missile in case the Soviets deploy an ABM, a step now prohibited by SALT I. And lastly, the MX is needed to persuade the Soviets to negotiate seriously in Geneva, i.e. the bargaining chip we have been discussing here today.

Three of the five rationales are perceptual and political. The MX, with its hard target capability, is for the Commission more a symbol of U.S. resolve than a breakthrough in capabilities. True, the MX is more accurate than the Minuteman and true it would add some 900 new warheads to our inventory but it is clear that the Commission regards these technical advances as a primarily political device. Indeed, the final conclusion of the Commission is essentially a political one. "Finally the Commission is particularly mindful of the importance of achieving a greater degree of national consensus with respect to our strategic deployments and arms control." 100 MX missiles are in that context, a political compromise between 200 MX missiles, the original program, and no MX missile.

So, we are urged to spend \$26 billion to demonstrate national will to the Soviets and our allies, and to help us bargain in Geneva. For all the expense and all the perils of this highly controversial missile, only one of these rationales for it could possibly convince me, and that is the bargaining chip theory. If the MX is truly a necessary bargaining chip to help us reach a far reaching arms control agreement in Moscow, it should be considered. Unfortunately, this Administration makes it impossible for me to come to that conclusion.

What is the promise the bargaining chip holds out for us? In the words of the Scowcroft Commission:

"First, arms control negotiations - in particular the Soviets' willingness to enter agreements that will enhance stability - are heavily influenced by ongoing programs. The ABM Treaty of 1972, for example, came about only because the United States maintained an ongoing ABM program and indeed made a decision to make a limited deployment. It is illusory to believe that we could obtain a satisfactory agreement with the Soviets limiting ICBM deployments if we unilaterally terminated the only new U.S. ICBM program that could lead to deployment in this decade. Such a termination would effectively communicate to the Soviets that we were unable to neutralize their advantage in multiple-warhead ICBM's. Abandoning the MX at this time in search of a substitute would jeopardize, not enhance, the likelihood of reaching a stabilizing and equitable agreement. It would also undermine the incentives to the Soviets to change the nature of their own ICBM force and thus the environment most conducive to the deployment of a small missile."

That is an eloquent statement and one with which I agree. The ABM Treaty of 1972 is the precedent for the START talks, and it is worth repeating here what happened. Both the Soviets and the U.S. were developing highly expensive and questionably effective anti-ballistic missile systems. On the eve of the successful culmination of the ABM negotiations, the U.S. Congress

fully funded the ABM program, knowing that it was under discussion at the ABM talks. As we know, the Soviet and American delegations agreed not to deploy more than one, limited ABM system each. The U.S. program and its Soviet counterpart were effectively stopped in their infancy and that particular path for the arms race was never followed by the superpowers.

The Commission urges that the MX should be regarded similarly. We in the Congress should support the MX program knowing that our negotiators might trade it away for an ever more secure balance of Soviet-American strategic forces.

And that is essentially what the Administration was trying to have us believe until Dr. Adelman, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, unveiled the deception.

It was a delicate balancing act to promote the MX as a bargaining chip without explicitly saying so. On June 15 Secretary Shultz appeared before the Committee on Foreign Relations and asserted that the President had placed "all strategic systems on the table" in Geneva. In a letter to Senator Cohen, the President promised to "constrain the number" of MX missiles "to the minimum" and asserted that the level of MX deployment "will be influenced by Soviet strategic programs and arms reduction agreements."

I have an article by Hedrick Smith of The New York Times which outlines this tightrope on which the Administration attempted to walk with the MX. I request unanimous consent that it be reprinted at the conclusion of my remarks.

Already suspected of harboring anti-arms control sentiments, the Administration made these assurances and implied the MX bargaining chip with limited, but yet substantial success. The Senate and the House supported the 100 missile deployment in Minuteman silos in May.

Last month, Dr. Adelman ended the guessing game. In a closed briefing to the Foreign Relations Committee, he set out in detail the exact role the MX could play in the Geneva talks. That briefing was classified, so I cannot discuss the numbers or conclusions presented by Dr. Adelman.

The next day, however, I and the Chairman, Senator Percy, were surprised to receive an unclassified letter from Dr. Adelman, which sought to clarify his remarks in the closed hearing of the previous day. Let me read the letter to my colleagues.

"Dear Mr. Chairman:

At yesterday's hearing Senator Pell asked whether under any circumstances the U.S. would be prepared to give up the MX program?

The following is my answer for the record:

'The President has made clear that the scale of MX deployment will be influenced by Soviet strategic programs and arms reduction agreements. The MX is the U.S. response to a massive build-up of Soviet ICBMs over the last 10 years, and unless the Soviets are prepared to reverse this build-up and forego their heavy and medium ICBM's, the U.S. will go forward with MX.'

I have sent letters to Senators Pell and Tsongas, who inquired extensively about this matter."

It was signed by Dr. Adelman.

The critical phrase is of course "...unless the Soviets are prepared to reverse this build-up and forego their heavy and medium ICBM's, the U.S. will go forward with the MX."

I suppose that Dr. Adelman regrets having written that letter on two counts - for one, it reveals to the Soviets a bargaining position which can only reduce the effectiveness of our START delegation in Geneva. And secondly, it sets out terms for the bargaining of the MX which are patently unnegotiable with the Soviet Union. Far from a bargaining chip, the MX according to Dr. Adelman is the sine qua non of our strategic program. In return for the nondeployment of MX, the Soviets would have to dismantle SS-18's, 19's, and 17's, a staggering proposition involving 1,000 U.S. warheads to be exchanged for over 5,000 Ss-18, SS-19 and Ss-17 warheads.

Deputy Secretary of State Keenth Dam testified a few days later. He attempted to restore the ambiguity on the bargaining chip issue, as did Secretary Shultz, but no one disavowed the Adelman letter. It must stand as a blunt expression of the U.S. negotiating posture.

The key question haunting the President and his Administration is and will be the depth of his commitment to arms control. This problem preceded the current MX debate and has found expression time after time in one misstep or misstatement after another, each casting doubt and suspicion on the arms control agenda of the President.

It is a distressing list beginning with the long delays before the President presented arms control proposals to the Soviet Union in Geneva, the constant stream of cold war rhetoric directed against the Soviet Union, the nomination of General Rowny to head the START delegation, the accelerated decline and demoralization of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the refusal to support the already signed Threshold Test Ban and Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Treaties, the long hiatus in bilateral talks on anti-satellite weapons, the reports from Geneva of acrimonious and fruitless exchanges between General Rowny and his Soviet counterpart, Mr. Karpov, not to mention the Adelman nomination itself which said volumes about the importance of arms control to the President.

Seen in that light, the MX story is not all that surprising, but nonetheless, the Administration's arms control cloak on the MX is striking in its transparency. The bargaining chip status for the MX is, in my view, a charade. The justifications for deploying the missile have been stripped down to a slender argument about perceptions and marginal improvements in capability.

On the other side of the issue, the MX is troubled by questions regarding its high value status as a target for Soviet missiles, its hair-trigger tendencies due to that high target value, and its contribution to an eventual first strike U.S. capability. The MX has been called a destabilizing weapon by its critics. It also must be said that the Soviet ICBM program is destabilizing and must be curtailed through negotiations.

I have always thought that the MX could make a ~~profound~~ contribution to our security if it were creatively joined with an arms control outcome. I no longer see that possibility under the Reagan Administration. I will vote in favor of Senator Hart's amendment.

#####