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DECISION ON SALT

Mr. TSONGAS. Mr. President, the subject of my remarks today will be the SALT II agreement. I have made my decision on the treaty. There is no point in delaying the announcement. My distinguished colleagues should know what my position is and why I have adopted it.

I want to state, Mr. President, that my decision has not come easily. Strategic arms limitation is one of the most complex issues the Senate has ever considered. It is also profoundly important to the cause of peace and security. Our deliberations here will have a far reaching significance. We say that on most issues, but this is one where it certainly applies. It is our responsibility to inform ourselves as completely as possible on this vital issue.

For expert help, I first turned to my home State of Massachusetts. Blessed with many universities and sophisticated, industrial enterprises, Massachusetts is renowned for its abundance of intellectual talent. The field of strategic affairs is no exception.

I decided to form a Massachusetts advisory group of 25 SALT experts. I could easily have formed a group four times as large, given the extraordinary pool of brains and talent in my State.

The range of opinion in the group is wide, from armament to disarmament advocates. We have met three times since February, each session lasting 3 hours.

I owe a profound debt of gratitude to this group for educating me in the complexities of SALT and the strategic balance.

I am also indebted to the many Government experts who came to my office to brief me on various aspects of SALT. A luncheon group organized by Senator CRANSTON and concerned exclusively with the SALT II agreement has been extremely helpful. I have carefully followed the SALT hearings in both the Foreign Relations and the Armed Services Committees.

There has been no lack of information on SALT, and no shortage of debate. I am here to say that I have heard enough; my mind is made up. I will support SALT II. In its present form, the agreement is acceptable. It can be improved, however, by several understandings and reservations such as those which the Foreign Relations Committee has already approved in its deliberations.

I think that my knowledgeable colleagues are already well acquainted with the provisions of the treaty. I need not go into great detail. Essentially, SALT II imposes equal overall ceilings on the number of strategic nuclear delivery systems for both the United States and the Soviet Union. The two sides agreed to count launchers rather than the actual weapons, and the numerical ceilings apply to launchers of intercontinental ballistic missiles, launchers of

submarine-launched ballistic missiles, heavy bombers, and air-to-surface ballistic missiles. Within the overall ceiling, there is an important sublimit on the number of launchers of land-, sea-, and air-based ballistic missiles equipped with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles, or MIRV's.

The treaty also limits fractionation on the number of MIRV'd warheads per missile, a key provision. The treaty prohibits mobile launchers of heavy ballistic missiles. Both sides are limited to the development of only one new strategic missile.

This brief summary of the treaty suggests the scope of this arms limitation document. SALT does not disarm the superpowers, but it touches almost every aspect of present and future strategic forces. It took 7 long years of tough negotiations and the efforts of three American Presidents to reach an agreement. We can be proud of the results.

At the same time, we must be realistic and levelheaded about this treaty. In its complexity and scope, the treaty invites misconceptions and errors of interpretation. Critics and even some advocates of SALT carry clouded perceptions of what SALT really represents. A great deal of misinformation passes for revealed truth. I think the air should be cleared of these misconceptions.

Critics of the treaty have charged that we cannot trust the Russians to uphold their end of the SALT bargain. According to this view, the Soviets are our enemies, and a treaty based on trust is unworkable.

This criticism is based on one crucial but false assumption—that SALT is based on trust. The SALT negotiations brought together two mutually suspicious, frequently antagonistic adversaries. Each side sought to advance its interests while recognizing, at the same time, that some form of arms limitation was mutually beneficial. The climate of the talks was anything but trustful. The document before us today is the product of that cautious, careful process. Trust was not a factor.

It should be equally clear that the enforcement of the treaty will depend on verification procedures, not trust. We are equipped with a vast array of detection devices in space, in the air, on land, and on the sea, many of which are aimed at the Soviet Union. Any violation of the treaty which would significantly affect the strategic balance is detectable. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have come to that conclusion. I have come to that conclusion. Trust is not involved. Vigilance is.

A second misconception, often voiced by SALT critics, is that if the Soviets want SALT, then we should reject it. This shallow reasoning is based on the zero sum game: Anything the Soviets gained must be equivalent to what we lost in the negotiations. If this were true, then any negotiation between adversaries would be impossible. It ignores the fundamental fact that the two sides have found areas of agreement which advance the interests of both parties. As in a trade between two strangers, both sides leave with their conditions improved.

This is what our SALT negotiators have achieved. The treaty enhances our security. The Russians undoubtedly feel the same way about SALT and their security, and that is the way it should be.

The third misconception is that SALT I and SALT II are to blame for the Soviet military buildup. By the same logic, SALT is blamed for the expected vulnerability of our own land-based missiles to a Soviet first strike in the mid-1980's. SALT is seen as a sinister plot to diminish our strength relative to the Soviet Union. In that view, SALT becomes some sort of 1950's style sellout.

This logic is not only faulty, it is dangerous. The Soviet military buildup began long before SALT was a glimmer in Lyndon Johnson's eye. The momentum of the Soviet program has continued through SALT I and will finally break up against the limits of SALT II during the terms of the treaty.

By the same token, the vulnerability window of our land-based ICBM's has been predicted by our defense analysts for years. SALT did not create this dilemma of vulnerability—the culprit is the technology of the arms race. The accuracy of ICBM warheads, both ours and the Russians', has advanced to the point where the allowance for error is measured in feet, not miles. No land-based silo can withstand so accurate a strike. It seems to me that blaming SALT for the relentless spiral of the arms race is more than unfair, it is dangerous and absurd.

The final misconception I want to address has to do with high expectations for SALT. I think we all have been tempted by this one, but it should be clear now that SALT II is not disarmament, or is it not an end to the arms race. It does not even achieve significant reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers. In his enthusiasm, President Carter oversold SALT in the first months of his administration. He then saw his hopes for disarmament dashed by the harsh realities of the arms race and the strategic balance. Some of us have not yet accepted what has become a distressing fact—arms control is attainable step by step, not by a giant leap.

We know now that SALT II will not usher in the millenium. Those of us who had high hopes must look very carefully at what we have in hand. Is SALT II in our interest? Does it accomplish enough? Is ratification worth fighting for? The answer is "yes" to each question. The SALT II agreement is vital to our national interests—it will enhance our national security. Let me briefly explain why.

First, we should understand how this treaty will limit Soviet strategic programs. By the end of the treaty's term, 1985, the Soviets will have dismantled 10 percent of their strategic forces. They will not be allowed to deploy their mobile strategic missile, the SS-16, and that weapon is developed and ready to go. The Soviets will not be able to exploit their throw weight advantage because SALT places limits on the number of warheads on each missile. The Soviets will be limited to one new missile out of the

four which they have currently under development. These are significant restraints. SALT imposes them.

What about limitations on American programs? Hawks should be happy to hear the list of current weapons programs which SALT does not disturb. For example, the new Trident submarine and Trident missile program is permitted. Development and eventual deployment of our highly advanced air-launched cruise missiles are not restrained. If we wish to go ahead with the controversial MX program, SALT poses no effective limits. We can modernize our bomber forces and modernize NATO theater nuclear forces if we so choose. SALT does limit the United States, but not in ways which interfere with present programs.

What would happen if the Senate rejects SALT II? A world without SALT is definitely not in our interests. Consider these disadvantages: SALT II prohibits deliberate concealment of strategic weapons. Without SALT, the Soviets could proceed with secret programs free of any obligation to respond to the objections of the United States. Without SALT, we will know less about the Soviet force structure and have almost no control over its development. Without SALT, the Soviets could continue their ICBM program and deploy warheads and missiles far in excess of the SALT II limits. In the case of the Soviet heavy missile, the SS-18, the Soviets could deploy up to five times the number of warheads permitted by SALT, up to 15,000 warheads according to Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.

I do not think it is necessary to elaborate in greater detail why SALT enhances our national security. I am convinced that the case for ratification is overwhelming.

Why, then, is SALT in trouble? The answer is in two parts: Linkage and defense spending. First, let us talk about linkage.

The history of the SALT negotiations shows a uniform pattern. At every point in time when a Soviet-American confrontation in the Third World seemed to threaten our interests, we quickly linked Soviet behavior to the SALT talks. Consequently, the SALT talks have been a flawless barometer of the slightest shift in Soviet-American relations. If relations sour, SALT is off. When the problem fades away, SALT is on.

The pattern is very consistent. When South Vietnam fell in 1975, SALT suffered. When the Soviet-supported faction prevailed in the Angolan Civil War, we forced a pause in the SALT talks. When Soviet arms and Cuban troops arrived in Ethiopia during 1977, and when Zaire was threatened by the invasion of Shaba province last year—in each case—the SALT negotiations were stalled, at our insistence. The pattern continued after the treaty was signed in Vienna this June. I refer, of course, to the impact of the Soviet combat brigade on the SALT debate. In this case, SALT was the victim of a 17-year-old Soviet provocation. It seems that the fate of SALT can be linked to almost anything.

As is usual in such episodes, a vocal minority exploited an opportunity to

weaken SALT by pointing to Soviet adventurism. For a time, it was doubtful whether SALT would reach the Senate floor this year. But, these linkage rituals flower briefly and then wither quickly away. Thankfully, we are now back on track in the Senate.

My objections to linkage do not mean that I wish to ignore Soviet misconduct in the Third World. To the contrary, Soviet behavior frequently requires a strong U.S. response. The question is how best to impose costs on the Soviets. Zeroing in on SALT assumes that only Soviet interests are at stake. That is pure nonsense. Our interests, American security interests, are equally at stake in the SALT process.

The fundamental reality is that SALT is important to both superpowers. Linkage ignores this fact. It is therefore senseless and ineffective. This can be seen in the ephemeral fortunes of each episode. SALT endures in spite of these attempts to destroy it with extraneous arguments.

I am reminded of Gulliver, whose size and strength was checked by a gang of Lilliputians equipped only with the weakest thread. SALT faces the same sort of threat from linkage. On its merits, the treaty is unassailable. Henry Kissinger, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary Brown have stated that the treaty should be ratified. There is strong bipartisan support for SALT II in the Senate. The reason SALT is in trouble is not because of any defect in its construction. SALT is imperiled by these Lilliputians of linkage.

SALT deserves better. Certainly the Soviets have not succumbed to this uniquely American urge to shoot ourselves in the foot. When we mined Haiphong Harbor and bombed rail lines in North Vietnam in May of 1972, the Soviets did not cancel the SALT summit scheduled for later that same month. In fact, May 26, 1972, was the date we signed SALT I with the Soviets. One can imagine what we would have done in similar circumstances.

In the same way, the Soviets did not use the Chinese invasion of Vietnam earlier this year to delay the SALT negotiations. The China attack came precisely at the moment when Washington was extending a very warm welcome to Premier Deng Xiaoping. The Soviets objected strongly to the coincidence, but did not seek vengeance on SALT.

No, SALT linkage is a uniquely American pastime. It is the product of our vigorous democracy in which advocates of an inflated defense budget can use whatever tactics they feel comfortable with to attain their objective. And the defense budget, of course, is the underlying issue in the SALT debate. SALT II is not in dispute; the battle will be fought over how much for defense.

The lines are drawn clearly in the Senate. The advocates of a big defense increase are saying openly that the price of their SALT vote is an irreversible commitment to significantly higher defense budgets. They are offering to make a cynical exchange: arms procurement in return for arms control. The program, the weapons, the precise expenditures

are not of immediate concern. The aim is for overall percentage increases in the defense budget. The details, we are told, will come later.

I am willing to discuss the merits of any spending program on its merits. That includes defense spending proposals. I am concerned about the Soviet buildup and I think we need to carefully consider what countermeasures might be necessary. I will not, however, sign over a blank check to any part of our Government. Congress cannot be denied its basic responsibility to scrutinize budgeting requests item by item. This applies to housing, welfare, veterans programs; that is, every function in the budget, and that should include defense.

In closing, let me say that I am hopeful that the Senate will ratify the SALT treaty. As the moment draws near for the decisive Senate votes, I believe that many of my undecided colleagues will recognize the awesome implications of a world without arms control. I think that the horrible devastation of a nuclear exchange will enter their computations in a more profound way. They will return to the fundamental issue—our national security. They will vote for a reduction in the risk of nuclear war. They will vote for a continuation of the arms control process, they will vote by a two-thirds majority in favor of SALT II.

Mr. President, let me just end up with two comments.

First, I reflect the feelings expressed last week by Senator LEAHY of Vermont. He spoke about his children and the impact that he feels emotionally of his obligation to insure that the world he leaves behind for them is one worth living in. I share those sentiments.

Second, again in reflecting the remarks of the Senator from Vermont, I believe that the performance of the majority leader in this debate on this issue will secure his place in history.

I have seen politics at the city council level, the county commissioner level, and the congressional level. I have seen great statesmanship, and I have seen cowardice. I have seen people who believe that their reelection is in the national interest, and I have seen people who could care less about the issue.

Perhaps the reality of the Senate is a little different from what one perceives on the outside. But I think that the reason we have people in leadership is to provide that leadership, and I hope that those colleagues of ours who are concerned about reelection, concerned about politics, and concerned about those kind of things should look to the performance of the majority leader.

I say to you, Mr. Majority Leader, that I am proud of your performance and I am proud to be a member of your majority.