

A: Yes.

Representative, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)

Q: Did the MBFR negotiations get started before you left?

A: I left just before the actual negotiations in Vienna began. I had gone back to Washington to present the final plans to Admiral Thomas Moorer, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But I found out that MBFR was not uppermost in his mind; the strategic arms negotiation was. I learned that a deal had been struck between Scoop Jackson and Henry Kissinger. Scoop Jackson didn't have confidence in General Royal Allison, the JCS representative to the SALT talks. Kissinger wanted Jackson's support for the ABM treaty. As part of the payment for Jackson's support of the ABM treaty, Jackson would get to name the representative to the strategic arms talks. The person he named was me.

I had met Scoop Jackson 20 years earlier and we had become friends. However, I didn't want the SALT job. I had spent a year and a half getting MBFR started and considered it more important than SALT. Besides, I felt I was back on a career track and had a good chance of being promoted to four stars as the U.S. permanent representative to NATO. In fact, it had been Scoop Jackson who was responsible for a setback in my career earlier. Jackson wanted me to introduce armed helicopters in Vietnam, something I was myself interested in. I saw a role for helicopters in a counterinsurgency operation. They seemed ideally suited for seeking out and destroying guerrilla forces. This got me into the middle of a roles and missions fight, with the result that my promotion to three stars had been held up for several years. Having been promoted to three stars late in my career, I still saw a fourth star on the horizon.

Besides, Admiral Moorer resented what he felt was interference with his prerogative. He felt he should be able to pick his own representative to SALT and had an admiral in mind to replace General Allison. I told Moorer that was fine with me because I didn't want the job in SALT. Moorer told me he was going to talk to Jackson and Kissinger and tell them he was running the Joint Chiefs of Staff and entitled to name his own representative* "Over my dead body," he said, "Will someone tell me who will be my representative."

The next day I went to see Admiral Moorer. He leaned back in his chair, threw out his arms and said, "I'm dead."

He told me it was a done deal. Jackson and Kissinger had taken the deal to the President who had given his approval.



Henry Kissinger and Edward L. Rowny.

“Then how do I get out of it?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, “if it will make you feel any better, you can talk to the chief of staff of the Army.”

I went to see the Army chief. The chief, General Abrams, was ill so I saw his acting chief, Fred Weyand, a close friend and contemporary of mine. He was sympathetic but said the only way out was to resign from the Army. I asked him if I could go talk to Senator Jackson. He said, “Go ahead, but I don’t think it will do any good.”

I went to see Senator Jackson. “Why are you doing this to me?” I asked. “I thought you were my friend. Moorer doesn’t want me to be his representative on strategic arms and wants me to continue to be his MBFR representative. And that’s what I want to do. Besides,” I said, “you set me back in my career twice before, first when you reported I was out in front at the Infantry School by teaching

nuclear tactics, and second when you recommended to Cyrus Vance [then Deputy Secretary of Defense] that I should introduce armed helicopters in Vietnam." The idea of arming helicopters and using them in counterinsurgency operations was a success, but had set back my career because of a roles and missions fight among the military services.

"Now you're setting my career back again. The job as JCS representative to SALT is a three-star billet and, as I know you're aware, despite my set-backs I'm once again on track where I might get my fourth star."

"You military officers are too rank conscious," Jackson said. "You're always concerned with your own interests. What about the country's best interests?" A hard body blow!

"I'm doing what I think is in the country's best interests," I said. "I'm backing Steinhoff's idea of setting up reductions in conventional forces. And there's nothing more important than reducing conventional forces."

"Wrong," said Jackson. "Reductions in nuclear arms are more important." Then, deciding to hit me again where it hurt most, Jackson repeated a lecture on "Duty, Honor and Country" he had given me earlier in my career. "Go ahead and take the job of JCS rep to SALT II," he said. "The Soviets have two three-star generals as their military representatives, while the U.S. has only one three-star general." Jackson was well aware of the "double coverage" the Soviet military would give me on the negotiating team.

"Two times three equal six," he said. "I'll see that you get a fourth star; the U.S. will still only have two thirds of their number of stars at the negotiating table. And if I fail he said, "who will know a hundred years from now whether you ended your career as a three- or four-star general?"

It was a hard question to answer: in fact, who in a hundred years would remember MBFR or SALT? In the end it was Jackson's "Duty Honor, Country" lecture that got to me. I knew that he was right and didn't protest further. I knew in my heart, however, that I would never reach my ambition of becoming a four-star general. I anticipated that the United States would never risk upstaging the Soviet Union's military representatives. We would not seat a four-star general opposite a Soviet three-star general, even if there were two of them. My assessment proved to be correct; when Jackson later proposed that I be promoted, the Secretary of State vetoed the idea.

Q: What did your job entail as the JCS representative to SALT?

A: As the representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I was the principal military advisor to Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, the head of the SALT II negotiating team. It was my job to see to it that our national security interests were not being harmed. As part of my job I kept the chairman of the JCS and the other chiefs informed as to what was going on in Geneva.

Q: You held this position for over six years, during three presidencies did you not?

A: Yes. I was the person on the negotiating team with the longest tenure. U.S. team chiefs and members changed quite frequently. One of the reasons why I stayed on the team from the beginning to the end of SALT II was my personal conviction that the U.S. team should have some continuity. The Soviets kept the same people negotiating for long periods of time. Most of the Soviets who were in SALT II had been in SALT I and stayed with SALT II until the treaty was initialed. On our side, the representatives of the Secretary of State, the Arms Control Agency, and the Defense Department rotated every year or two. I was the only one who started with the team who was there at the end.

Just before the election of 1976, I thought that I had been on the SALT II team long enough and notified the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that I wanted to leave. I interviewed for several jobs in the civilian sector and accepted one which I thought was challenging and one in which I could continue to serve the nation's interests. Besides, it paid twice my salary in the military. The chairman at the time was George Brown, a West Point classmate. We had become friends over the years. George said that I should reconsider. "You will have lots of time to make money later on," he said. "Besides, I need your expertise. The team needs continuity," he said. "If Jimmy Carter wins," he said, "I think I can offer you several inducements. Harold Brown will become the Secretary of Defense, and Cyrus Vance will become Secretary of State. Both of these persons know and respect you. You can play a larger role than you have in the past."

Carter was elected President and, as George Brown had predicted, Harold Brown and Cyrus Vance came aboard. George Brown went to see Harold Brown and talked to him about offering me the position of representing not only the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but the Office of the Secretary of Defense as well. Harold Brown agreed that there would be one representative for both agencies. Furthermore, George Brown asked Secretary Vance to take me along with him to ministerial meetings if I would come aboard with the new administration. It was a very attractive offer. I debated whether to take them up on it. I had seen Harold Brown's plan for SALT II and liked it. It was a plan I thought I could convince the chiefs they should support. The plan had been worked up in detail by Walter Slocombe, a lawyer I had known and respected. Furthermore, Zbigniew Brzezinski

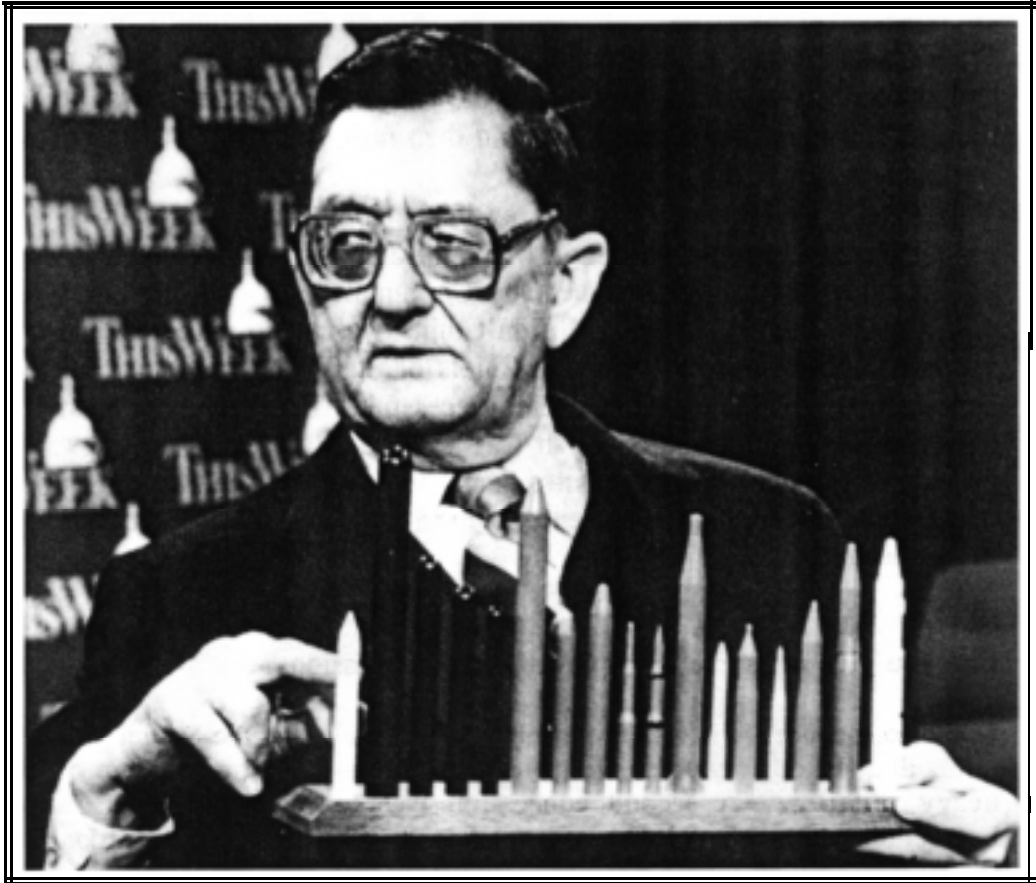
was named Carter's national security advisor. I had known Brzezinski when he was a professor at Columbia and felt he could be counted upon to support our national interests. In the end I decided to give up the civilian job offer and not retire from the Army.

However, the honeymoon didn't last very long. The Secretary of Defense, Hal Brown, said that if I were the only military representative, it would unbalance things at the negotiating table. The State Department and ACDA would have two votes while the Defense Department would have only one. Moreover, he said, since I had worked rather well with Walter Slocombe, we would make a closely knit team. He withdrew the offer that I be the sole military representative and said that I would revert to my former position as the Joint Chiefs of Staff representative.

However, Secretary Vance upheld his commitment that I would go with him to the ministerials. And George Brown said that I would not only be the chiefs' representative but their principal advisor on arms control matters.

I considered quitting, but again I decided to stay on. The main reason was that I was given two hats, not only would I represent the chiefs at the negotiating table but would be their principal advisor. When I was in Washington, I would attend meetings of the National Security Council with the chairman. When I was in Geneva, I would at times simply cable my advice. At other times, when the issues were important, I would travel back to Washington and join the deliberations at National Security Council meetings. This put me in a unique position. Because I knew the background of what was happening in Washington, I was in a better position to know the ins and outs of what the White House was thinking, more so than the chief negotiator himself. Moreover, the chief negotiator, Paul Warnke, was dividing his time between being the director of the Arms Control Agency and the chief negotiator, each a full-time job. Warnke soon learned he couldn't do both jobs and left most of the negotiating in Geneva to his deputy, Ralph Earle. In my dual-hatted position I definitely had more inside knowledge than Earle.

In my capacity as principal advisor to the Chiefs of Staff, I made annual estimates on where we were going in the SALT talks. I presented them both orally and in writing. In December of 1977 I wrote a rather pessimistic report to the chiefs saying that I did not think that the emerging treaty, if it were to continue along the lines it was then headed, would be in our national interest. The chiefs took note of my estimate and agreed with me. They said, however, that I should work hard at trying to repair the damage and to help make the treaty come out right. Nevertheless, the situation continued to deteriorate, mostly because the Carter administration, in general, and Paul Warnke, in particular, were willing to make more compromises than the chiefs thought were desirable.



Edward L. Rowny compares Soviet and U. S. missiles, November 1974.

I made another annual estimate of the same type in December 1978. I said that I saw no way of reversing the situation so it would result in an equitable agreement. I said that under these circumstances I could not support the emerging treaty and told the chairman of the JCS that I thought the best thing for me to do was to resign. The chairman said that he thought I should continue to stay on; to resign now would be to embarrass the administration. Besides, he said, I could continue in my task of “damage limiting,” that is, trying to make the final product better. If the treaty was not satisfactory to me when it was initialed on June 15, 1979, I could resign at that time.

I said I did not think this was a satisfactory way to proceed and asked to speak to Secretary Vance. This meeting, which took place on December 27, 1978, lasted several hours. I explained to Vance that things were not going well from my point of view and that I could not in good conscience support the treaty which was shaping up. Vance said he respected my point of view but didn’t agree with it.

He repeated in effect what the chairman had told me. Rather than embarrass the President and resign in midstream, he felt I should continue to work on the treaty and make it as good as I could. In the end, when the treaty was initialed, if I thought it was not satisfactory I should then resign.

This meeting I had with Vance was in the immediate aftermath of a week of negotiations we had just finished in which the administration thought it would wrap up the entire SALT II agreement by Christmas. As a result, our side made a number of concessions which I didn't think we had to make. I had cabled my views on these issues to the Joint Chiefs of Staff who tried to stem the tide of concessions. On some they were successful. However, on most they were overruled by the White House. It was because I saw the way things were going that I wrote such a pessimistic assessment. It also caused me to make up my mind that I could not in clear conscience support a SALT II agreement along the lines it was headed.

Q: Can you give me some examples of these concessions?

A: One of our concessions was to permit heavy missiles on the Soviet side but not on our side. In other words, we gave them the unilateral advantage of possessing heavy missiles. A second concession was to not include the Backfire, an intercontinental bomber, in the count of Soviet weapons. The third concession had to do with a number of aspects of verification. One of these was covered by Article XV.3, which dealt with the encryption of telemetry of missile testing. In December 1978 we gave in to a "Catch 22" arrangement. In it the Soviets said they would not encrypt any information which was included in the provisions of the agreement. But then they wouldn't include the things we wanted into the provisions of the agreement. It was a meaningless proposal. We said, "No encryption, period." They said encryption is permitted but not of that data which would be included in the provisions of the agreement. Then they would not put any provisions into the agreement. This made it a meaningless exercise. And we made other concessions on verification provisions as well.

It had become quite obvious by the end of 1978 that we were negotiating on the wrong things. We were, for example, negotiating the number of launchers of ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles]. But launchers don't kill; it's the missiles fired from the launchers that kill. More specifically, it's the warheads on these missiles that kill. This was an important issue because the Soviets were putting more warheads on their missiles and also making them more accurate. Time was acting against us. What looked like a good deal when we started SALT II was being eroded. The Soviets were circumventing the intent of the agreement by producing more warheads.

Q: Is that what is called MIRVing?

A: Yes. Since the Soviets had a monopoly on heavy missiles and we had none, it meant that they had about 6,000 intercontinental ballistic missile warheads to our 2,000, a 3 to 1 advantage. Moreover, they had about a 3 1/2 to 1 advantage in throw-weight, a measure of the destructive power of the warheads.

In all fairness, I should mention that Secretary Brown recognized what was going on. Before the end of the Carter administration, Brown saw to it that we began modernizing our own missiles. Down the road we would overcome some of the disadvantages caused by the unrelenting Soviet modernization program. One of the main reasons why the Soviets gained such a large advantage over us was that we put a small number of warheads on our ICBMs while the Soviets put more warheads on theirs. Our largest ICBMs, the Minuteman II and Minuteman III, have one and three warheads, respectively. However, the smallest of the Soviet systems, the SS-17, had four warheads, the SS-19 had six warheads, and the SS-18 had ten warheads. Added to their 3 to 1 advantage in warheads was their 3 1/2 to 1 advantage in throw-weight. More throw-weight allowed them to get better gyros and guidance mechanisms. This translated into improved accuracy. Originally we thought that it was not important how many warheads they had because we had the qualitative advantage due to the accuracy of our missiles. But now that the Soviets had caught up to us in accuracy, the numbers of warheads became very important.

In sum, I felt SALT II was not in our best interest. As I pointed out to the chiefs and to Secretary Vance, I was breaking with SALT II not because I was against arms control. In fact, I favored arms control agreements. However, the provisions now being adopted would establish precedents from which we could not recover in the future. As I told the chiefs, a modest step is not a useful one if you are unable to take two successive steps across a chasm. You would only fall into it. Accordingly, I saw a SALT II treaty emerging which would be against our security interests.

Q: Did you get any support for your views?

A: I was supported, at least for the time being, by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I also had the support of the representative of the Secretary of Defense. But the representatives of the State Department and the Arms Control Agency were very powerful opponents on the other side and generally carried the day.

Q: What were the circumstances just prior to your retirement?

A: In the closing days of the SALT II negotiations, the Soviets continued to play their eleventh-hour tactics. Up to the very end they tried to wring additional concessions from us. At 6 p.m. on the last evening, June 14, 1979, we thought the final deal had been struck. However, at 8 p.m. the Soviets reopened the negotiations and continued to argue until midnight.

To assure that there would be a deal, we gave in some more. The treaty was finally initialed by Ambassadors Earle and Karpov a few minutes after midnight. They then broke out the champagne to celebrate. I didn't join them but went back to my office and sent a cable to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I said that I could not, in good conscience, support the agreement just initialed. I had two requests: first, that I be authorized not to go to Vienna with the group to witness the signing of the treaty; and second, that I be put on the Army retired list, effective 1 August, some six weeks hence.

Within hours, early the next morning, I received a reply. It said that both of my requests were approved. I was authorized not to go to Vienna but to report back to Washington. I was also told that I would be placed on the retired list, effective 1 July 1979. This was only two weeks away. It usually takes about six weeks to retire. This was the minimum amount of time it took to wind up one's affairs, take the necessary physical exams, get debriefed, give up one's security clearances and the like. I had to compress six weeks of work into two.

Up until the end, the chiefs had supported me. But they came under great pressure from the White House to go along with the agreement. The chiefs, in the end, concluded that it was a useful but modest step. There was one exception, the chief of the Marine Corps, who said that it was not a useful step. He was the only chief who backed me all the way. The other chiefs, while not entirely happy with the SALT II agreement, said they would support it.

Q: Didn't President Carter later say that he discovered, all of a sudden, that the Soviets weren't as honorable as he thought they were?

A: Yes, but this wasn't until six months after the treaty had been initialed., As soon as the August congressional recess was over, the Senate confirmation hearings began.

Because I had been one of the negotiators and because I now opposed the treaty, I was one of their star witnesses. By late fall, it was clear that the Senate could

not muster the necessary 66 votes to ratify the treaty. In fact, they had about 55 votes, a majority but not the two-thirds majority required by the **Constitution** for ratification of a treaty. The Senate Arms Services Committee wrote a report stating that more than a dozen serious errors would have to be corrected before they would vote for the treaty.

In late December, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. President Carter withdrew the treaty from consideration by the Senate, citing the Soviet invasion as his main reason for doing so. It was at this point that President Carter said he had learned more about the Soviets in two weeks than he had up to that time. SALT II, which had been dead in the water for several months, was now sunk.

Q: What did you do after you retired? Obviously you testified before the Senate. But what else did you do?

A: In addition to testifying, I became a scholar at the Wilson Center of the Smithsonian Institution. I spent the next year writing a book about my experiences in negotiating with the Soviets.

Cochairman, Advisory Group for Governor Ronald Reagan

In late 1979 I received a call from Governor Reagan who said he had read my testimony before the Senate. I was pleasantly surprised that he was familiar with the main faults of SALT II and quite pleased that he agreed with my views. He asked me if I would talk to him when he came to Washington. I met with him in January 1980 in a downtown hotel. We talked for about three hours. At the end of our conversation Reagan asked me if I would come to work for him. I said, "Governor, I want to ask you a question point-blank. Are you in favor of arms control agreements, because you should know that I am. If you are not in favor of arms control, then I'm not your **man.**"

"Yes," said Reagan, "I am in favor of arms control but I'm in favor of good arms control agreements and not arms control agreements for agreements' sake." He said he favored only those arms control agreements which were equitable and verifiable. He added that a bad arms control agreement would be worse than no agreement at all.

I told **Reagan** I agreed with him completely. He also queried me quite extensively on strategic defenses. "Isn't there a better way of deterring a would-be aggressor who had a pistol at your head than holding a pistol to his head?"