

# The Pentagon's \$150 Billion Shopping List

*“How do we stop this dangerous, ruinous rivalry? For a start, we can simply recognize that overkill is overkill, and superflous weapons are superflous.”*

—Sen. John Sparkman, Chairman,  
Foreign Relations Committee

**O**ur economy may be on the rocks, the quality of life in America may be deteriorating for everyone, our foreign policies may be bankrupt, but the arsenal of democracy is to remain alive and well. The Defense Department wants the United States to continue to put its faith in weapons and military power. The U.S. produces the most destructive weapons in the world, the most advanced tanks, planes, submarines, bombers, missiles, and yet we are called upon to try harder to remain “number one.” World demand for the products of our advanced industrial civilization is insatiable and growing: U.S. weapons manufacturers sold a record \$8.2 billion worth of arms overseas in 1974, an increase of more than 100% over 1973. America’s dubious world leadership in weaponry may be the ultimate expression of our philosophy of conspicuous consumption.

The proposed fiscal 1976 Bicentennial federal budget says a great deal about our misplaced priorities. In the new budget President Ford asks the Congress to appropriate almost \$108 billion for military purposes, the highest level of military spending in history. This is an increase of \$16 billion over last year. At the same time, funding for non-defense programs is projected to decline by more than \$25 billion. The Pentagon, according to its five-year plan for 1976 through 1980, plans to spend at least \$636 billion over this period.

The new military budget now being debated before Congress contains a bewildering variety of new weapons schemes. The Air Force and Rockwell International want \$749 million to continue development of their \$21 billion B-1 bomber program so that the U.S. will possess well into the 21st century a bomber that will be able to fly lower, faster, and carry more bombs than any bomber ever built. General Dynamics is working on a submarine for the Navy,

the Trident, that will be bigger (two football fields long), quieter, and fire more nuclear weapons than any submarine in history. It will also be the most expensive weapons system in history, at \$1.6 billion or more per copy. The Army has Chrysler and General Motors competing to produce the Tank of the Future, the XM-1 Main Battle Tank. The XM-1, estimated to cost almost \$2 million each, will shoot further, more accurately, have more armor protection, and a smoother ride than any other tank. Assuming, of course, that everything goes according to plan, which frequently does not happen.

The 1976 military budget asks for funding of new missiles of every conceivable description: anti-ship, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, anti-missile, surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-surface, air-to-air, continent-to-continent, laser-guided, radar-guided, electro-optical-guided, television-guided. New military aircraft come in all shapes and sizes and nicknames: Skyhawks, Tomcats, Eagles, Cobras, Prowlers, Hawkeyes, Intruders, Corsairs, Chinooks, Orions, Vikings, Sea Stallions, Sea Cobras, Iroquois, not to mention AWACS and the unpronounceable AABNCPs.

Every three months the Pentagon is required by Congress to publish the current estimated costs of major weapons systems. The latest cost-overrun status report on 40 big ticket items indicates that these weapons alone will cost \$150 billion, \$41 billion more than originally expected.

The American public has little way of judging whether there is any real need for particular weapons and must rely on the Congress to exercise control over the military budget and the Defense Department. The Congress, however, is barely up to the task of beginning to explore the intricacies of the many complex weapons systems and defense issues buried in the labyrinths of the plus-\$100 billion defense budget. Unlike the Defense Department, Congress has little

by David Johnson

information and even less time. Congressman Michael Harrington of Massachusetts, who has been a member of both the House Armed Services and Foreign Affairs Committees, puts it this way: "By the time a weapons program reaches the stage at which it becomes a prominent issue for debate in the Congress, the battle is already lost. The Defense Department's near monopoly on relevant information, together with the vested bureaucratic and economic interests which propel the high-budget, high-prestige weapons programs, conspire to give such programs an all but unstoppable momentum." What the Pentagon wants, the Pentagon gets.

Congress has become increasingly critical of high and escalating levels of military spending. Although there is not yet a consensus on how to reduce the defense budget, there is a new and growing recognition that changed international circumstances and economic pressures make it necessary to choose among competing programs and priorities. Many Congressmen are increasingly aware that spending on weapons and forces that contribute to U.S. strength only in a marginal way can no longer be afforded. The American experience in Indochina seems to have taught the lesson that military power is of declining usefulness in coping with the country's problems.

New superweapons are not the answer. Even such a hardline conservative as Senator John McClellan, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has come to admit that any real meaning of national security is far broader than its narrow military component: "Inflation is rapidly becoming as great a danger to our national security and the stability of our society as is the danger from any potential foreign foe."

A number of controversial weapons systems are being critically examined by the Congress during hearings and action on the fiscal 1976 defense budget. Questionable strategic weapons include the B-1 bomber, the Trident submarine, new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), strategic cruise missiles, and new ABM systems. The bulk of the defense budget, about 75 percent, goes to pay for the projection of U.S. military power overseas in Europe and Asia. Controversial conventional weapons include the AWACS warning and control aircraft, the SAM-D air defense missile system, the C-5A aircraft, the XM-1 tank, and the expensive F-14 and F-15 tactical fighter aircraft.

- **B-1 Bomber.** For the Defense Department, the most vulnerable weapon in the new budget is the B-1 strategic bomber. The B-1 is a weapon that may very well be pricing itself out of existence, although Secretary of the Air Force John McLucas says that he has no "cost breaking point" for the B-1. Many members of Congress, however, are near or have already passed their breaking point with the B-1. The cost of developing and producing 244 B-1s is estimated at \$20.6 billion, or \$84 million each. The cost continues to skyrocket and inevitably will shortly exceed \$100 million per plane.

Critics of the B-1 argue convincingly that the U.S. is well ahead of the Soviet Union in the strategic arms race and point out that the U.S. already has 8,500 strategic nuclear weapons and 500 bombers, compared to 2,800 nuclear weapons and 160 bombers for the Soviet Union. Even a

handful of former weapons enthusiasts have come around to acknowledging that somehow, somewhere a line has to be drawn. Says Senator John Sparkman of Alabama, the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "How are we to put a stop to this dangerous, ruinous rivalry? For a start we can simply recognize that overkill is overkill, that superfluous weapons are indeed superfluous, and that many of the new systems being developed, though technologically fascinating, are redundant and unnecessary."

In an age when missiles can deliver devastating destruction in less than 30 minutes, a bomber that takes 10 hours to reach its targets can at best have only a minor role. The existing force of B-52 and FB-111 bombers will in any case provide a bomber force with considerable overkill through the 1980s. The U.S. spends about \$5 billion a year on its bombers. Including European-based and aircraft carrier-based planes, the U.S. today already has eight different types of aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons in an attack on the Soviet Union.

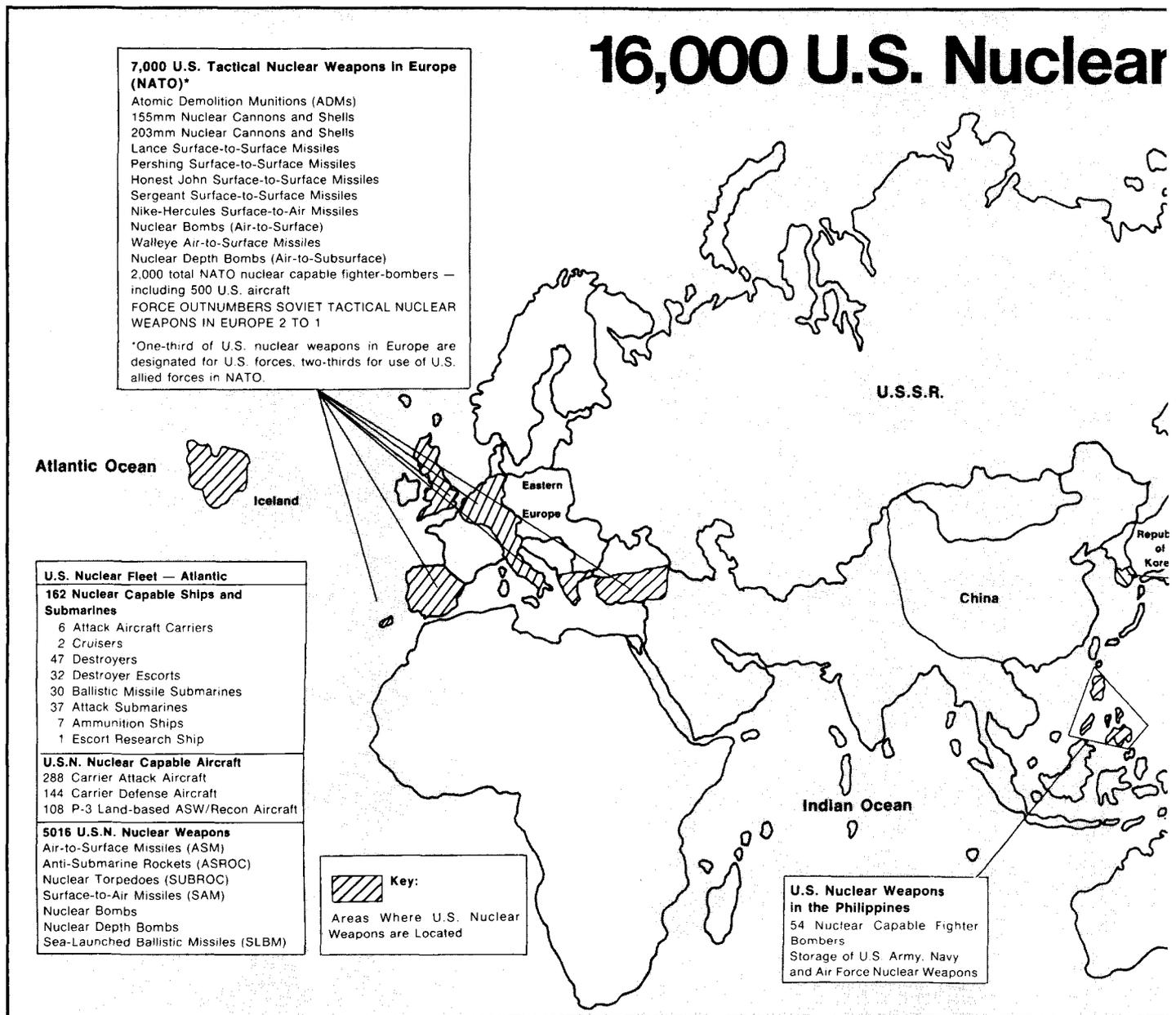
Two billion dollars has already been spent on the B-1. The fiscal 1976 budget requests another \$749 million, including \$77 million to initiate procurement. The \$77 million is viewed by critics as an effort by the Air Force to get the Congress to commit itself all the way to ultimate full-production of the B-1. The Defense Department projects a request for \$1.7 billion for fiscal 1977 and continued funding at \$2 billion or more a year through 1983.

As yet, Congress has been unwilling to make a firm decision for or against the B-1. Alternatives such as a B-52 with new engines, a stretched FB-111, and a wide-body jet like the Boeing 747 armed with cruise missiles have been suggested. To counter such speculations, the Defense Department conducted a year-long investigation called the Joint Strategic Bomber Study which, not surprisingly, concluded that B-1 is best. The official conclusion sounds not unlike a toothpaste commercial: "Of the equal-cost forces examined, those containing B-1's performed substantially better. The low-flying, nuclear-hard B-1, with its high quality ECM, out-performed all other vehicles by a wide margin." The most egregious flaw of the DOD's study is that it assumed that the United States needs to spend as much money on bombers as the B-1 costs and compared only "equal-cost" alternatives. Employing typical tunnel vision, the DOD analysts neglected to examine the question of whether the country needs a bomber fleet in the first place and, if so, whether that capability could be obtained at much less cost.

A decision on producing the B-1 is scheduled for November 1976 and it seems unlikely that the Congress will stop the B-1 before next year. Although the plane is viewed with growing skepticism, continued funding of research and development is unfortunately all too likely.

- **Trident Submarine.** Next to the B-1, the most expensive weapon program is the Trident strategic submarine, currently estimated to cost \$16.2 billion for ten submarines, each armed with 24 4,000 mile-range Trident I missiles. Each Trident submarine will carry enough nuclear weapons to destroy any country in the world. The U.S. already has 41 strategic submarines carrying 656 Polaris and Poseidon

# 16,000 U.S. Nuclear



missiles with about 4,000 nuclear weapons. The new budget asks for \$2.1 billion for Trident, with a \$3.4 billion request expected for fiscal 1977. The Defense Department hopes to put the first Trident to sea in 1979.

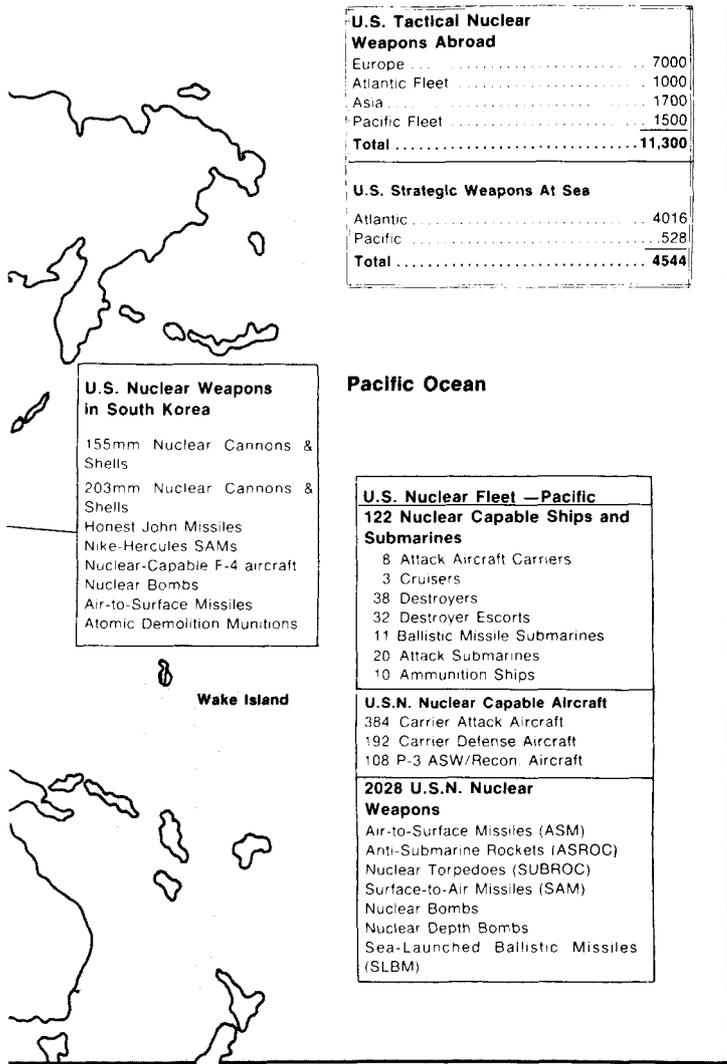
Existing missile submarines are invulnerable and considered by liberals and conservatives alike to be the “backbone” of the deterrent Triad of bombers and land-and sea-based missiles. Because of this “blue water” sentiment and because it was promoted as a bargaining chip in the SALT talks, the Trident program has had relatively smooth sailing through Congress. Although the rate of production has been slowed to three every two years, the momentum has seemed unstoppable.

The Cadillac of the Sea, or, as Navy Secretary J. William Middendorf calls it, “that great shield for America,” is promoted by the Navy primarily because of the advantages of having a longer-range missile permitting a submarine to utilize greater expanses of the ocean and escape detection.

In the absence of any evidence about how submarines will become vulnerable in the future, critics of the huge Trident believe that it is premature to be putting so many eggs in relatively few baskets. Longer-range missiles could be installed in existing submarines at much less cost, as, in fact, the Navy plans to do. The drive to build the Trident reflects a compulsion toward mindless modernization in the Defense Department, the pursuit of new technologies and superweapons irrespective of any realistic assessments and with ever more marginal returns.

- **New ICBMs.** The fiscal 1976 defense budget asks for more than \$900 million for continuing procurement of Minuteman missiles and research on a variety of new ICBM systems. To date the U.S. has deployed 1054 ICBMs, including 550 multiple-warhead MIRVed Minuteman III missiles, which can deliver more than 2,000 nuclear weapons. Defense Secretary James Schlesinger has stated that

# Weapons Abroad



the policy of the U.S. is to build up to the limits of the 1974 Vladivostok SALT agreement which had stipulated that the U.S. and the Soviet Union could have as many as 2,400 strategic delivery vehicles, including 1320 MIRVed missiles.

With the expansion of the Soviet nuclear missile force in recent years, U.S. ICBMs have become increasingly vulnerable, at least theoretically, to destruction. Some officials, including Dr. Fred Iklé, director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, have suggested that the U.S. should be moving away from reliance on ICBMs. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has also indicated some differences with Defense Department officials by stating that the much discussed disparity in missile throw-weight between the U.S. and the Soviet Union is a "phony issue."

The Defense Department's game plan is to keep all options open by investing billions of dollars in exploring almost all of the various schemes for new ICBMs. This is the

all too typical pattern of avoiding hard choices by giving everybody what they want. Options include mobile ICBMs that would be fired from airplanes (a Minuteman missile was dropped from a C-5A plane last fall in a test), mobile ICBMs that would be transported on land by train or truck, and new fixed large ICBMs that would compete with the Russians in who can build the biggest missile. Over the next ten years the U.S. could spend as much as \$50 billion in seeking solutions to the problem of Minuteman vulnerability.

Research is also being conducted on a variety of projects to bring to life Secretary Schlesinger's philosophy of a counterforce strategic policy. These programs to increase the accuracy and destructive power of U.S. missiles cost about \$150 million in the fiscal 1976 budget. The most well known effort involves developing a maneuvering warhead, a MARV, which would essentially eliminate all missile inaccuracies. Senator Thomas McIntyre, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Research and Development Subcommittee, fears that counterforce improvements will lead to weapons that could threaten a first strike and make nuclear war more likely. In reporting out of his subcommittee a bill that deleted funds for five counterforce programs, Sen. McIntyre argued: "Secretary Schlesinger is trying to move our basic strategic doctrine from our traditional emphasis on mutual assured destruction to a reliance on U.S. nuclear war fighting capability. We're alarmed that Pentagon preoccupation with exotic technologies and doctrines will distract us from our efforts to meet our prime national security requirement, which is to prevent nuclear war."

- **Strategic Cruise Missiles.** A new means of raining death on the Soviet Union and China is being pursued by both the Air Force and the Navy — the strategic cruise missile. Cruise missiles are small, unmanned, electronically-controlled aircraft powered by air-breathing turbofan engines. Strategic cruise missiles with ranges of 1,500 miles or more could be launched from planes, submarines, or surface ships. The Navy is requesting \$102 million in the new budget to continue work on a sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) and the Air Force is asking for \$51 million for an air-launched cruise missile (ALCM).

Pentagon interest in strategic cruise missiles is a classic case of imitative behavior in the arms race. Lacking aircraft carriers, the Soviet Union has developed relatively primitive and short-range cruise missiles primarily for attacking surface ships. Now, because the SALT agreements do not limit strategic cruise missiles and the Soviets have a weapon that vaguely seems threatening, the Defense Department wants to have them too, although strategic cruise missiles will do virtually nothing for our military capability. However, this may well open up a new channel for the arms race and could severely complicate efforts to control and limit strategic weapons. Any submarine or surface ship could launch such missiles and it would become impossible to verify arms control agreements.

Some members of Congress support the air-launched cruise missiles program as an alternative to the B-1 bomber. A relatively inexpensive stand-off bomber could launch ACLMs from outside of Soviet anti-bomber defenses.

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# Enough Is Enough

“What does ‘security’ mean at this moment in the nuclear age? Our 41 Polaris-Poseidon submarines *alone* can guarantee deterrence. Regardless of what program the Russians carry out, more efficient counterforce weapons add nothing to American security.”

**D**uring the past six years, our nuclear policies have been focused almost exclusively on the strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), which have occupied the center of the stage in our disarmament negotiations, have been directed almost entirely at seeking precise symmetry in nuclear weapons capabilities even though this was obtained by adding to our arsenals rather than limiting them. Fears that an appearance of nuclear inferiority would be translated into political weakness have driven our nuclear weapons programs to the point that our stockpiles of strategic warheads have quadrupled since 1968. Nuclear testing has accelerated to compete with the Russians in sophistication of weapons design, while funds for improved protection of weapons materials have been withheld.

Meanwhile, India has tested its first nuclear explosive, ostensibly for peaceful applications but, nevertheless, simultaneously demonstrating a weapons capability. Israeli leaders have acknowledged a potential to make atomic weapons so that even if these are not now actually available, they could easily be a factor if another conflict breaks out in the Middle East. The energy crisis has given renewed impetus to international programs developing nuclear power. These programs will soon make fissionable material usable for weapons much more readily available throughout the world. Terrorists are operating with ever-fewer inhibitions, and we have not learned how to deal with them. Given this rapidly changing situation, our myopic views on nuclear security need urgent re-evaluation.

On November 24, 1974, President Ford and Secretary General Brezhnev met at Vladivostok to sign a strategic arms limitation agreement which was described as a “break-through” placing a “cap” on the arms race. However, when President Ford finally revealed a few of the specifics of the agreement almost a week later, it became apparent that this was the opposite of an arms control agreement. The ceilings, 2,400 strategic delivery vehicles and 1,320 missiles carrying MIRVs (multiple warheads which can be aimed at separate targets), were established significantly above approved present or future levels. The limits of the 1972 Moscow Interim Agreement were even breached, and no restrictions were put on the replacement of old weapons by new ones, thus promoting, in addition, a qualitative arms race.

Even though the Soviet Union had not yet started MIRV deployment, the ceilings allowed it to place MIRVs on



virtually its entire modern land-based ICBM force, and no limitation would be put on the number of their warheads. The U.S. could add 4,000 warheads to its already large arsenal by deploying the proposed 10 new Trident submarines: a decided step backward from the Interim Agreement, which would have at least required older submarines to be taken out of the fleet before 10 new Tridents could be added. Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger has also stated the Vladivostok Accords may require procuring even more than 10 Tridents and restructuring our strategic forces. Clearly, unless the Congress demonstrates unusually firm restraint, Vladivostok can become only a mechanism for sanctioning mutual arms build-ups that in times of economic stress might otherwise be difficult to justify.

Meanwhile, the American public has for six years been bombarded continually with new scare stories of the mounting Russian nuclear threat and with proposals for new U.S. weapons to match it. The Russians have been testing four new ICBMs, one larger than all of their previous monsters; a recent test series neatly coincided with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's October arrival in Moscow to revitalize SALT and to lay the groundwork for the Vladivostok meeting. For its part, while Kissinger was in Moscow, the U.S. put into the pot its SALT “bargaining