

Bates College

SCARAB

Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

6-16-1971

Opening Statement of Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Hearings on the Strategic Nuclear Triad

Edmund S. Muskie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scarab.bates.edu/msp>

Recommended Citation

Muskie, Edmund S., "Opening Statement of Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Hearings on the Strategic Nuclear Triad" (1971). *Speeches*. 96.

<https://scarab.bates.edu/msp/96>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Edmund S. Muskie Papers at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Speeches by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact batesscarab@bates.edu.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

AT THE

HEARINGS ON THE STRATEGIC NUCLEAR TRIAD.

June 16, 1971

Today the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization begins an investigation of the arms control effects of various proposed and existing weapons systems in the Defense Department budget. During the first two days, we will focus upon our strategic nuclear deterrent made up of land-based missiles, sea-based missiles, and manned bombers.

Under present world conditions our nation must maintain an arsenal of nuclear weapons that could, after an enemy attack, strike back and cause unacceptable damage to any enemy. The capability for nuclear retaliation, the so-called "assured destruction" capability, is what protects America from the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons.

This ability to retaliate can be maintained with different kinds of weapons or with a mixture of several. At present, the United States has for a deterrent a triad of three weapons systems: the Minuteman ICBMs, the Polaris submarine launched missiles; and the B-52 bombers. After absorbing a full Soviet surprise attack, each of these systems alone can destroy the Soviet Union. The Defense Department is now either planning to or is beginning to replace these with a new generation of weapons for each system; the MIRVed Minuteman III, the MIRVed Poseidon submarine based missile - perhaps to be followed by a new missile - launching submarine, ULMS - and the B-1 bomber.

The Subcommittee hopes to explore what effects these plans for new, more effective weapons and additional deployment of present systems will have on the arms race.

Some of the questions we must ask will be:

Are we planning to build extra weapons that are not needed for our strategic protection but which may push the Soviets, out of fear, into more arms spending?

Do our plans for expanding our weapons capabilities give us so large an attack force that the Soviets might feel we were preparing to strike first and try to knock out their forces? If this is so, would this not fuel Soviet ABM efforts and lead to nuclear uncertainty?

Are there some kinds of weapons that are less vulnerable than others or less capable for first strike use, which can be used to assure deterrence while at the same time stabilizing the arms race?

All of these questions revolve around one central concern. Since different weapons have different effects upon the arms race, can we modify our deterrent forces to help slow down the arms race while still maintaining our invulnerable nuclear deterrent?

More specifically, I hope the Subcommittee can determine whether our present plans for building weapons might threaten the progress of the SALT talks through deployment of systems that may now be under discussion for inclusion in limitation agreements. We should also see whether our weapons plans, by themselves, can be shaped to stabilize the weapons race through moderation and restraint. And finally, we must ask whether our weapons plans will lead to a period of general uncertainty and insecurity where each nation feels its existence may be threatened.

During the past few years, many weapons systems have been challenged in the Senate on grounds of effectiveness, cost or redundancy. Our Subcommittee will try to add another perspective to the debate over the defense budget - whether a particular weapons system, because of its effects on the arms race and prospects on future arms control agreements will increase or decrease our security.

We must understand that more weapons do not always mean more security. We must have enough weapons to deter any aggressor. But more than enough weapons may undermine our security by driving our adversaries into greater weapons production and defensive measures which in turn threaten us.

- 3 -

Our security demands some stability to the arms race
just as much as it demands an invulnerable nuclear deterrent.

In short, we seek a deterrent that will give us both
protection and stability.

#####