National Security Decision Memorandum 256

TO: The Secretary of Defense
    The Director of Central Intelligence
    The Director, Arms Control and
    Disarmament Agency
    The Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission
    The Under Secretary of State for Political
    Affairs

SUBJECT: Nuclear Test Ban Policy

The President has reviewed the results of the NSSM 195 study and
subsequent Verification Panel work. On the question of limitations
on underground nuclear tests, he has decided that an agreement
with the USSR to a threshold ban is acceptable in principle. Such
an agreement should meet the following conditions:

-- The threshold test ban should enter into force no earlier than
January 1, 1976.

-- PNEs may be allowed only if information adequate for proper
verification is furnished by the Soviets. In any event, PNEs must be
covered by the same threshold as nuclear weapons tests.

-- The U.S. should oppose the Soviet proposal concerning a quota
between an upper and lower threshold.

-- The U.S. can accept a threshold based on yield if adequate
geological information is provided by the Soviets and their weapons
testing is restricted to specific test sites. The U.S. position is that
the threshold must be at least 100 KT.

-- With respect to explosions above the threshold, the U.S. can
accept a provision allowing for no more than two unintended and
slight breaches of the threshold per year.
The President has directed that the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Defense develop a nuclear weapons testing program which would complete all essential testing above a 100 KT threshold by January 1, 1976. This program should be submitted for the President's approval by June 19, 1974.

Henry A. Kissinger

cc: The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff