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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT 

SUBJECT: Short-Range Nuclear Forces and NATO's  
"Comprehensive Concept"

The current dispute over modernization of NATO's short-range nuclear forces (SNF), and particularly the land-based missile portion of those forces, stems from the US-Soviet INF treaty. By eliminating land-based missiles in Europe with ranges over 500 kilometers, the treaty had three principal effects: (1) underscored the need to make sure that the US nuclear forces left in Europe, as the most credible element in extended deterrence, remained viable and survivable; (2) intensified German worries that the remaining short-range nuclear forces could only hit targets on German soil, implying that arms control was helping everyone but the Germans; and (3) set a powerful precedent for relying on the elimination of "whole classes" of nuclear weapons as the way to protect the continent from the danger of nuclear war. The 'double zero' solution in the INF treaty eliminated all US and Soviet land-based missile systems with ranges of 1000-5500 km. (the first zero) and all land-based missile systems with ranges of 500-1000 km. (the second zero).

NATO's response to these effects of the INF treaty was twofold. First, the Alliance reaffirmed that it would, as Defense Ministers had agreed at Montebello in 1983, modernize and improve its short-range nuclear forces while substantially reducing the overall numbers of nuclear weapons stocked in Europe. This NATO agreement specifically included deployment of a follow-on to the aging Lance land-based missile. Second, in order to reassure the Germans that total numbers of SNF weapons could be reduced, the Allies agreed to address these FRG concerns in a document called the "Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament." NATO will adopt this document at the May summit.

However, as Kohl's political situation has deteriorated, the FRG has increasingly advocated language at NATO for the "Comprehensive Concept" which both challenges the Montebello commitment to SNF modernization, specifically the need to commit

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again to a follow-on to Lance (FOTL), and urges the immediate initiation of negotiations with Moscow on SNF systems. The SNF negotiations that Bonn seeks would, in the current political climate, create almost irresistible pressures for a 'third zero', eliminating missile systems from 0-500 km. range. This would in turn hasten the denuclearization of Europe. We prefer to await further progress in conventional arms control and rely on unilateral restructuring of SNF forces by the two sides, rather than negotiations with Moscow, to achieve equal SNF missile ceilings for the U.S. and Soviet Union at lower levels.

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