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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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May 7, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: JACK MATLOCK

SUBJECT: A Strategy for U.S.-Soviet Relations

Before leaving for Tokyo, you asked me to think about possible trade-offs to consider in our negotiations with the Soviets. I have also been working on a re-draft of NSDD-75 as you requested, but find that we will probably need some additional guidance before we can get a draft into reasonable shape to show you. Before I get into these matters, however, let me summarize the current situation as I see it, as background for the various recommendations which will follow.

Current Situation

1. The Soviets are playing games with the summit date and conducting a very public propaganda campaign on arms control in part to bring pressure to bear on us and to place strains on the Alliance, but also in part because Gorbachev has not yet really consolidated his power and has been unable to obtain agreement on how (and perhaps whether) to proceed in concrete negotiations with us.
2. Up until the Chernobyl disaster, the Soviet propaganda campaign was beginning to make inroads in the broad public in Europe: what they saw was the image of a Soviet leader making proposal after proposal for "peace" and the President always saying "no." A distorted, inaccurate -- even ridiculous -- impression, but one obtained by headline readers who do not understand the precise issues and probably never will.
3. The Soviet handling of the Chernobyl disaster has set this Soviet campaign back in a dramatic way, but its impact may not be lasting. The net effect a few months from now could be an upsurge in generalized anti-nuclear sentiments, unless we act rapidly to lead public opinion.
4. The PR fiasco which Chernobyl represents will, for a time, make the Soviets very testy. They will be inclined to lash out verbally in very belligerent ways. But their belligerence is unlikely to lead to dangerous moves. Nevertheless, they will be

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careful to avoid any appearance of caving into to US pressure during a time when they are perceived as being in a weak position.

5. We have given Gorbachev every opportunity to negotiate in private on the relevant issues, and up to now he has not been willing (or able) to do so. We need to keep these offers open, but at the same time step up our own public campaign. We must demonstrate to him that he does not have the PR field to himself, and if he wants results he must get his act together and come to the table with negotiable positions.

6. For this reason, I believe we need a combination of private negotiating strategies and a highly public campaign to put the President out with some dramatic proposals. They need not be radically different from our current policies, but should build on them and be presented as new, even if they are largely repackaging.

In this effort, we should be careful about using the Chernobyl disaster too directly. To appear to be exploiting it could backfire with the public eventually (particularly in Europe) if it appeared that we were just berating the Soviets to avoid negotiation. Obvious and direct exploitation of the issue also could push Gorbachev even further into a corner and delay his ability to draw rational conclusions from the disaster, including the desirability of getting on with arms reduction negotiations with us. But the disaster is on everybody's mind -- particularly in Europe -- and there are ways we can capitalize on this indirectly.

In this effort, we should couch our proposals so that rhetorically they seem responsive to at least some of Gorbachev's proposals. This is not a matter of going easy on him (which he certainly does not deserve), but rather of giving him enough wiggle room to claim some "achievements" at home. So long as what he gets is cosmetic, this can serve our interests (and bolster the President's image in Western Europe).

The Public Track

We should immediately try to identify some areas where the President can make some "new" proposals. When we have identified them, we must plan a strategy for getting them out to the public: the timing of the speeches and/or announcements and the follow-up to insure proper public attention.

If we are really serious about a given proposal, we should present it to the Soviets a few days in advance privately. However, we should not rule out some ideas, less serious, which

we will want to float by surprise -- just to show that we too can play that game if that is the way the Soviets want it.

Some ideas which come to mind as worth careful thought are the following:

1. Civilian nuclear power plants: Propose a negotiation to establish international safety standards and an international system of monitoring for safety. (We have asked the State working group to look at this possibility, but it may take a formal memo to ensure that it gets proper attention. I am sending a separate memo setting forth the idea in more detail.)

2. START/SDI: Reiterate our current START proposals in simple form (without pointing out that it is our old proposal), along with some indication of how we would solve the defensive weapons problem. (For example, the President could state that we are willing to negotiate verifiable measures to prevent use of defensive systems to increase a first-strike potential and to ban deployment of weapons of mass destruction in space; he might also offer a formal commitment to negotiate for a specified period should strategic defense systems prove feasible, survivable and cost-effective.)

3. Nuclear Testing: Acknowledge importance of issue and propose that our specialists meet to review each other's proposals, with a view toward progressive, verifiable limitations on testing, commensurate with the pace of reductions of offensive weapons. (Note: this is not really new, but the public does not grasp these elements of our position since they have usually been buried in a lot of other detail in our proposals and have not been stressed by press accounts.)

Alternatively, if it proves possible to propose a time-limited stand-down on both nuclear testing and missile testing, this could be very dramatic, and would provide an organic link between START and testing.

4. Chemical Weapons: We should give our CW draft higher visibility by reemphasizing the need for prompt agreement on effective verification. This could take the form of a "proposal" for verification which would in effect summarize the provisions in our current draft -- a matter which has not received much public attention (most people don't even know that we have proposed a CW ban).

5. Biological Weapons: We might consider proposing an international verification regime to supplement the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. This would address a real problem which has been largely swept under the rug (the virtual certainty that the Soviets have retained a BW capability) and utilize the

renewed concerns raised by Soviet secrecy as a result of their handling of Chernobyl.

6. Ideally, we should also include some proposals (or spin-off proposals from our previous ones) in the regional conflict area and the area of increasing contacts and the flow of information.

A Comprehensive Proposal to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons?

The most ambitious way to present our ideas would be to take off from the President's desire to eliminate nuclear weapons and Gorbachev's January 15 proposal and present a comprehensive proposal of our own. This would be far more difficult to staff than the piecemeal proposals listed above, but -- at least conceptually -- it could have some advantages:

1. It could provide a framework for working our entire four-part agenda into the "peace" theme.
2. It would provide a vehicle for making clear not only why but how arms reduction is related to regional conflict, openness, human rights, and the like.
3. It would answer the charge that the President is either not serious about the elimination of nuclear weapons, or has not thought through how it can be done.
4. It would provide a clear basis for retaining nuclear weapons and testing until such time as a series of conditions have been met -- many outside the strict arms control field.
5. It could be designed to appear constructively responsive to Gorbachev's initiative.
6. It would make a very big splash if we took special efforts to play it up, and has the potential for keeping the President out front as the major champion of peace and arms reduction.

It has obvious downsides as well, since if we attempt to put together such a grandiose scheme quickly, we could inadvertently create problems for ourselves in some specific negotiations. And it might prove impossible to overcome bureaucratic objections to the individual parts. Nevertheless, I have outlined at Tab II a notional plan of what such a proposal might look like.

The Private Track

While pressing our case publicly with vigor, we should also keep the private negotiating track active, in order to make clear to the Soviet leadership that we are willing to negotiate when they

are. We of course will have the regular sessions of NST, CDE, MBFR and the like, but should keep hammering at the Soviets in more direct channels as well.

If the President does not receive a reply from Gorbachev to his letters by next week, I believe he should consider sending a brief private note simply saying that he remains ready for serious negotiation in the various areas they both have discussed, and expressing the hope that Gorbachev will soon respond to his ideas. At least implicitly, he might point out the incongruity of spending so much time in public statements and not being able to respond officially to actual proposals.

Organizing for the Push

As we give thought as to how we conduct both our public and private efforts, we should also give careful thought to how we can best plan and conduct them in coordinated fashion. We first need to develop a comprehensive plan for the President's approval, then put into place a mechanism for seeing that it is carried out, responsibly and with discipline.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you note your reaction to the ideas set forth and indicate any instructions for further action or consultation on my part.

Approve ____ Disapprove ____

Attachments:

- Tab I Potential Trade-Offs
- Tab II Notional Proposal for Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
- Tab III Draft Letter to Gorbachev

POTENTIAL TRADE-OFFS IN US-SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS

START-SDI:

It is clear that the Soviets eventually will require at least a cosmetic link to strategic defensive systems if they agree to the 50% reduction of strategic weapons. There are probably several ways that this can be done without impinging on a robust SDI research program. Example:

In return for Soviet acceptance of a 50% reduction of strategic nuclear weapons in categories acceptable to us, one or some combination of the following:

-- reaffirm that U.S. program will follow "strict" interpretation of ABM Treaty for specified number of years;

-- exclude testing and deployment of certain types of systems for a specified time period;

-- open laboratories -- or even joint research -- in some specific areas (would have to be coupled with right to challenge inspection of facilities suspected of being withheld from inspection or joint work);

-- exclude testing or deploying in orbit weapons of mass destruction;

-- make commitment to negotiate for specific period (e.g., two years) before deploying any strategic defense system (or, perhaps, any space-based strategic defense system);

-- (possibly): undertake commitment to reduce or eliminate any strategic weapons with prompt hard-target kill capability simultaneously with deployment of SDI systems. (Probably inadvisable and impossible to negotiate in the sort of specific terms to make it meaningful; however, some thought might be given to the pros and cons of this approach.)

Note: The Soviets are making some mileage with their claim that the President considers SDI "non-negotiable". It would seem desirable to make clear publicly that SDI research is non-negotiable, but that we are prepared not only to discuss, but to negotiate appropriate restraints on deployment, so long as it is in conjunction with offensive weapons reduction.

>
START:

We probably should not change our current START position in any major way until the Soviets make a forthcoming counter to our most recent proposals. However, if negotiations become more serious on their part, the following might be a possibility:

-- Drop proposal to ban mobile ICBM's in return for legitimization of Midgetman. [Note: This would probably require legitimizing the SS-25 and therefore should be contingent upon limitations based on warheads, not launchers, to provide an incentive to move toward single-warhead launchers. It might also be coupled with a commitment to replace all multiple warhead mobiles to single warhead missiles within a specified time-frame -- say, ten years.]

INF:

Since the main thing the Soviets are looking for (I believe) in any settlement is removal of the Pershing II's, I think we should basically stick with our current proposal, or alternatively the one of November 1, with the proviso that if the Soviets accept no reference to British and French systems, we could negotiate on the timing and magnitude of reductions in the Far East -- so long as the ultimate goal is zero.

Nuclear Testing:

I believe that the principal Soviet motivation on this whole issue is to put an end to excalibur, which seems to cause them genuine and deep concern (maybe because they have done extensive work themselves in this area and fear that we will solve some of the problems which have eluded them).

This aside, Gorbachev has now invested so much political capital in the issue that any gesture in his direction will be of some value to him.

Trade-offs available to us are probably limited, but if the idea of proposing a time-limited moratorium on both nuclear tests and missile tests can fly, this could provide an opening for linking offensive weapons reduction with testing limitations and at the same time give Gorbachev something he can claim internally is a concession from us.

If it is impossible to make such a proposal, we could consider proposing a diminishing number of nuclear tests, and perhaps a lower threshold, provided we can get a better verification regime and there is an agreement to reduce offensive nuclear weapons.

> MBFR:

-- Agree to negotiate on Gorbachev's "Atlantic to Urals" conventional weapons concept if Soviets agree to Western proposals regarding verification of MBFR reductions.

Human Rights/Trade

-- Loosen political controls on export licensing in response to progress in Jewish emigration, family reunification, and release of notable political prisoners.

-- Convey privately to Gorbachev that President is willing to look seriously at much broader economic cooperation in context of an offensive arms reduction agreement, greater restraint in regional conflicts, and better human rights performance.

Regional Conflicts:

It is hard to find direct trade-offs here, since we must not go down the road of trading off one area for another (condominium). However, in private, we perhaps can be more explicit in describing what we would be prepared to do in specific situations in response to certain Soviet actions. Examples:

-- Afghanistan: Perhaps offer to use influence to reduce transport of military equipment across border in proportion to any reduction of Soviet troops on the ground and in the context of a timetable for complete withdrawal. (Might also be coupled with requirement that Soviet troops cease offensive operations against Mujaheddin during withdrawal period.) [Note: practically would be very hard to do, and we should not admit officially that we are supplying the muj.]

-- Libya: Perhaps see if the Soviets would be interested in a deal whereby we would commit ourselves not to strike Libyan territory in the future, except in response to direct military attacks on our forces, if the Soviets terminate supplies of military equipment and advisors to Qaddafi. (A private commitment to them, not a public or legal commitment.) [I'm a bit dubious about this, but if we are unlikely to strike again soon anyway, we might at least float the idea privately with them.]

* * * * *

Obviously, some of these ideas are relatively off the wall and would require more thought and checking before doing anything about them.

There are many other potential ones in specific bilateral areas, but at this point I have concentrated primarily on the larger issues.

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DRAFT PERSONAL LETTER TO GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Now that I have returned from my trip to East Asia, I want to express in more direct fashion my sympathy for the Soviet citizens who have been affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. I know that you and your officials are working diligently to contain the effects of the accident and to assist those affected, and you have my sincere best wishes for your success. As I indicated to you before, if there is anything we can do to help, we stand ready and willing.

Industrial accidents, of course, occur in all countries. As political leaders, our duty -- it seems to me -- is to see that our specialists learn from them in order to prevent them in the future. This is a common problem of all industrialized nations, and this is why there has been so much interest outside the Soviet Union in the details of what happened at the Chernobyl reactor. Since we all have an interest in making nuclear power safe, we have a common interest in learning from mishaps wherever they may occur.

I want you to know that the United States would like to develop a more cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union on these and other industrial safety issues. I hope we both can think in these terms as we look to the future.

I also hope that we can proceed as soon as possible in dealing constructively with the various issues about which we have corresponded recently. Therefore, I await with interest your comments on the ideas I conveyed through Secretary Dobrynin in March and those in my earlier letters.

With personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

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RW

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NOTIONAL PLAN FOR ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Three phases, lasting minimum of 5 years each, but of a sufficient duration to achieve the objectives of each. (Second and third phases are likely to take longer than five years, since they will require basic changes in Soviet habits and practices.) Nevertheless, if plan is issued, public position is that it could be done by the Year 2000 if we start now and keep up momentum.

Phase One:

- 50% reduction of nuclear weapons in appropriate categories;
- INF reduced to zero world-wide;
- Elimination of any imbalance in first-strike capabilities;
- Verifiable CW ban;
- BW verification regime;
- Expanded CBM's;
- Compliance with all agreements to satisfaction of both parties;
- Reduction of superpower military involvement in regional conflicts;
- Effective international actions against terrorism, including quarantine of states sponsoring terrorism and of groups committed to it, and ban on military supplies or military training to such countries and groups.
- Agreement on verification measures to limited nuclear testing; further limitations on testing as nuclear weapons are reduced.
- Tightened non-proliferation regime;
- Substantial improvements in citizen-to-citizen contacts and the flow of information across national boundaries.
- MBFR agreement to establish verification measures during time-limited freeze.

Phase Two:

- Further reductions on conventional weapons, world wide;

-- Agreed, verifiable limits on use of military force outside national boundaries;

-- Termination of direct or indirect superpower military involvement in regional conflicts; peaceful settlement of major regional conflicts;

-- Establishment of free contacts and information flow across national borders, including:

a. No restrictions on travel of one's own citizens to foreign countries;

b. No restrictions on travel of foreigners in one's own country;

c. No restrictions, legal or administrative, on contact of one's citizens with foreigners;

d. Reserved access in the mass media for foreign opinion;

e. Right to establish cultural and information centers, and outlets for periodical, book and VCR sales, in the other country, at the sole discretion of the "sending" country;

f. Elimination of national legislation which makes the expression of divergent opinion a criminal act; effective guarantees of the freedom of speech.

-- Negotiations with other nuclear powers to achieve a substantial additional reduction of nuclear weapons -- at least 50% overall.

-- Negotiations on conditions for a CTB, to take effect in third stage.

-- Reduction of strategic controls on trade.

-- Agreements on role to be played by defensive weaponry.

Third Stage:

-- Fine-tune and extend various verification measures developed in previous stages;

-- Establish in practice the habits of openness and restraint from use of military force negotiated earlier;

-- Eliminate all strategic and political controls on trade;

- Negotiate a legal enforcement regime for a world free of nuclear and other mass destruction weapons, and for the control of the level and use of conventional weapons;
- Deploy agreed systems of strategic defense;
- As these measures go into place and are proven in practice, proceed to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons in final stages.

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