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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 02705 01 OF 02 281834Z  
ACTION SS-01

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O 281830Z JAN 92 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8014  
WHITEHOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002705

EXDIS **DECAPIED**

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PARM, PREL, PNUC, PGOV, RS, CIS  
SUBJECT: THE MYSTERIOUS YEL'TSIN SPEECH THAT NEVER WAS

REF: MOSCOW 2237

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

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2. RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BORIS YEL'TSIN'S APPEARANCE  
JANUARY 28 AT THE RUSSIAN BLACK SEA PORT OF  
NOVOROSSISK SHOULD DISPEL EXAGGERATED RUMORS ABOUT  
HIS HEALTH. THESE RUMORS WERE SET OFF BY YEL'TSIN'S  
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 02705 01 OF 02 281834Z  
FAILURE TO DELIVER A MAJOR ARMS-CONTROL SPEECH AS  
EXPECTED JANUARY 27 AND BY HIS FAILURE TO ATTEND THE  
OPENING OF THE MIDDLE EAST MULTILATERALS. YEL'TSIN  
HIMSELF, MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF, AND THE RUSSIAN MFA HAD  
ALL GIVEN INDICATIONS TO THE EMBASSY OVER THE WEEKEND  
THAT HE WOULD PRESENT A MAJOR ARMS-CONTROL INITIATIVE  
TO THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE ON JANUARY 27. THE PROMISED  
SPEECH DID NOT TAKE PLACE, BUT SENIOR OFFICIALS AT THE  
RUSSIAN MFA HAVE TOLD US YEL'TSIN WILL MAKE THE SPEECH  
ON JANUARY 29, ALLEGEDLY TO AVOID UPSTAGING PRESIDENT  
BUSH'S JANUARY 28 STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS. RUSSIAN  
FOREIGN MINISTER KOZYREV AND SENIOR MEMBERS OF  
YEL'TSIN'S STAFF MAINTAIN THAT HE SEQUESTERED HIMSELF  
IN HIS DACHA IN PREPARATION FOR HIS UPCOMING TRIP TO  
THE UN AND CAMP DAVID. END SUMMARY.

3. RUSSIAN PRESIDENT YEL'TSIN TOLD THE AMBASSADOR AS

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Geoffrey Chapman, Senior  
Reviewer

EARLY AS FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, THAT HE WOULD GIVE A MAJOR SPEECH JANUARY 27 WHICH WOULD FOCUS ON ARMS CONTROL. OVER THE WEEKEND, RUSSIAN MEDIA LEAKED DETAILS OF YEL'TSIN'S INTERVIEW WITH AN AMERICAN TELEVISION NETWORK, IN WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY SAID SOVIET MISSILES WOULD NO LONGER BE TARGETED ON AMERICAN CITIES AND THAT RUSSIA WOULD PROPOSE THE COMPLETE ELIMINATION OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

4. THE EMBASSY MADE REPEATED CALLS TO YEL'TSIN'S STAFF THE MORNING OF JANUARY 27 IN AN ATTEMPT TO LEARN THE TIME AND VENUE OF THE PLANNED SPEECH. ALTHOUGH NO ONE ON YEL'TSIN'S STAFF COULD PROVIDE THAT INFORMATION, THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION IN THE KREMLIN WAS  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 02705 01 OF 02 281834Z  
THAT THE SPEECH WOULD TAKE PLACE. HIS STAFF DID ACKNOWLEDGE, HOWEVER, THAT YEL'TSIN WAS CURRENTLY "OUT OF TOWN" AND THEY DID NOT KNOW WHEN HE PLANNED TO RETURN. THE ACTING HEAD OF THE U.S.A. ADMINISTRATION OF THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ALSO TOLD POLCOUNS JANUARY 27 THAT HE WAS "NINETY-FIVE PERCENT CERTAIN" THAT YEL'TSIN WOULD GIVE HIS SPEECH LATER THAT DAY.

5. THE RUSSIAN MFA ALSO ANNOUNCED ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 27 THAT YEL'TSIN HAD CANCELLED A PLANNED MEETING WITH JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER WATANABE. THIS, COMBINED WITH YEL'TSIN'S ABSENCE FROM MOSCOW AND UNCERTAINTY OVER THE PLANNED SPEECH, LED TO RUMORS THAT YEL'TSIN WAS HAVING HEALTH PROBLEMS. A MID-LEVEL OFFICIAL IN THE RUSSIAN MFA'S U.S.A. ADMINISTRATION TOLD EMBOFF YEL'TSIN HAD CANCELLED BOTH THE MEETING WITH THE JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE SPEECH BECAUSE HE WAS "NOT UP TO IT". (GIVEN THE LARGE NUMBER OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IN TOWN FOR THE MIDDLE EAST MULTILATERALS, MANY OF THEM WANTING TO SEE YEL'TSIN, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT YEL'TSIN'S STAFF SCOTCHED THE WATANABE MEETING IN ORDER TO AVOID A STAMPEDE OF APPOINTMENT REQUESTS.) FOREIGN MINISTER KOZYREV TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT YEL'TSIN HAD GONE TO THE COUNTRY TO PREPARE FOR HIS UPCOMING TRIP TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CAMP DAVID.

6. RUMORS OF YEL'TSIN'S ILL HEALTH SHOULD BE SCOTCHED BY A JANUARY 28 RUSSIAN TELEVISION NEWS REPORT THAT YEL'TSIN IS IN THE BLACK SEA PORT OF NOVOROSSISK, WHERE HE IS VISITING ELEMENTS OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET.  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 02705 01 OF 02 281834Z  
ACCORDING TO THE NEWS REPORT, YEL'TSIN'S OFFICE STATED  
THAT THE VISIT IS NOT CONNECTED WITH THE QUESTION OF  
DIVISION OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET.

7. ON JANUARY 28, RUSSIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER  
MAMEDOV TOLD DCM THAT YEL'TSIN DECIDED TO POSTPONE HIS  
ARMS CONTROL SPEECH IN ORDER TO AVOID GIVING THE  
IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS TRYING TO UPSTAGE PRESIDENT  
BUSH'S JANUARY 28 STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS TO  
CONGRESS. AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE ALEKSEY OBUKHOV GAVE  
POLCOUNS THE SAME EXPLANATION FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF  
YEL'TSIN'S SPEECH. YEL'TSIN WANTS TO GIVE HIS SPEECH  
"VIRTUALLY SIMULTANEOUSLY" WITH PRESIDENT BUSH'S  
SPEECH. OTHER MFA OFFICIALS TOLD US YEL'TSIN NOW  
PLANS TO MAKE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, POSSIBLY A  
SPEECH, AT 9:00 A.M. MOSCOW TIME ON JANUARY 29, FOUR  
HOURS AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. PRESIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 02705 02 OF 02 281832Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 002705

EXDIS

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CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION YURIY PETROV TOLD VISITING A/S

NILES THE SAME DAY, HOWEVER, THAT YEL'TSIN WOULD MAKE AN ARMS-CONTROL STATEMENT "NO LATER THAN JANUARY 29" BUT THAT A TIME HAS NOT YET BEEN SET.

COMMENT

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8. WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE POSTPONEMENT YEL'TSIN'S JANUARY 27 ARMS-CONTROL SPEECH WAS RELATED TO THE TIMING OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S STATE OF THE UNION  
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 02705 02 OF 02 281832Z  
SPEECH, WHICH IS ALSO EXPECTED TO HAVE A MAJOR ARMS-CONTROL COMPONENT. YEL'TSIN MAY WELL WANT TO AVOID UPSTAGING PRESIDENT BUSH, BUT BY POSTPONING HIS SPEECH UNTIL AFTER THAT OF PRESIDENT BUSH YEL'TSIN ALSO HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAILOR HIS PRESENTATION TO THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.

9. RUMORS ABOUT YEL'TSIN'S ILL-HEALTH CIRCULATE PERIODICALLY IN MOSCOW. USUALLY THEY ARE CONNECTED WITH A DECISION BY YEL'TSIN TO CANCEL A MEETING OR BY THE ABSENCE OF THE RUSSIAN LEADER FROM PUBLIC VIEW. DURING THE AMBASSADOR'S JANUARY 24 MEETING WITH YEL'TSIN (REFTEL), HOWEVER, HE WAS ALERT, ANIMATED AND APPEARED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH. ON THE OTHER HAND, EMBASSY MOSCOW RMO HEARD FROM A RUSSIAN MEDICAL CONTACT, WHO IS A CLOSE FRIEND OF YEL'TSIN'S PERSONAL PHYSICIAN, THAT THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT HAD TO BE TREATED OVER THE PAST WEEKEND FOR A MASSIVE HANGOVER. (ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, THIS IS A FAIRLY ROUTINE PROBLEM FOR YEL'TSIN.) RUMORS ABOUT YEL'TSIN'S PUTATIVE PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL ALSO CIRCULATE WIDELY IN MOSCOW AND WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO SUBSTANTIATE THIS LATEST RUMOR. IN ANY CASE, QUESTIONS ABOUT YEL'TSIN'S HEALTH CAN PRESUMABLY BE PUT TO REST DURING HIS JANUARY 29 MEETING WITH SECRETARY BAKER.

10. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE, OF COURSE, THAT THE DELAY IN YEL'TSIN'S ARMS-CONTROL SPEECH MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN CAUSED IN PART BY DIFFERENCES ABOUT ITS CONTENT. TWO THINGS EMERGED VERY CLEARLY FROM THE JANUARY 17 MEETING OF 5,000 MILITARY OFFICERS IN THE KREMLIN:

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 02705 02 OF 02 281832Z  
THE OFFICERS ARE TIRED OF POLITICIANS "PLAYING GAMES" WITH THE MILITARY; AND THEY ARE FEEL A STRONGER SENSE OF LOYALTY TO THEIR OWN MILITARY HEIRARCHY, WITH CIS



ARMED FORCES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SHAPOSHNIKOV AT THE  
TOP, THAN THEY DO TO INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL LEADERS.  
MINDFUL OF THE DELICATE STATE OF HIS RELATIONS WITH  
THE FORMER SOVIET MILITARY, YEL'TSIN MAY HAVE NEEDED  
TIME TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE WHICH WOULD ALLOW HIM TO  
BE AN INNOVATIVE STATESMAN WHILE AT THE SAME TIME  
MEETING THE CONCERNS OF THE MILITARY OVER THE SCOPE OF  
PLANNED REDUCTIONS. END COMMENT.  
STRAUSS

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