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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 10, 1985

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UNCLASSIFIEDNATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 173BUILDING AN INTERIM FRAMEWORK FOR MUTUAL RESTRAINT ~~(X)~~

In 1982, on the eve of the Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START), I decided that the United States would not undercut the expired SALT I agreement or the unratified SALT II agreement as long as the Soviet Union exercised equal restraint. Despite my serious reservations about the inequities of the SALT I agreement and the serious flaws of the SALT II agreement, I took this action in order to foster an atmosphere of mutual restraint on force deployments conducive to serious negotiation as we entered START. My assumptions in taking this action were threefold. ~~(X)~~

-- First, I believed then, as I continue to believe now, that mutual, verifiable constraints on nuclear arsenals are important, especially as we try to move the Soviets toward our goal of greatly reducing and eventually eliminating the nuclear threat, which the SALT agreements did not do. I saw the START negotiations as the path to the equitable and verifiable deep reductions in the size of nuclear arsenals, that we seek. The United States was prepared to, and has offered the Soviet Union the elements for such agreements in Geneva. However, at that time, we recognized that negotiation of good agreements takes time. Therefore, I made the commitment not to undercut existing agreements as long as the Soviet Union exercised equal restraint as an interim policy to provide what we hoped would be a framework of mutual restraint as we pursued agreements that would put the arms control process on a better, more sound, long-term foundation. ~~(X)~~

-- Second, at the time, I hoped that the leaders of the Soviet Union would indeed show equal restraint. ~~(X)~~

-- Third, I judged that this policy of interim restraint would not adversely affect our national security interests, provided that, with the Administration and the Congress working together, the United States undertook those steps necessary to counter the strategic advantages the Soviet Union had been building over the previous decade. ~~(X)~~

Unfortunately, in certain key respects, these assumptions have not stood the test of time. ~~(X)~~

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by S. Tilley, National Security Council

In accordance with U.S. interim restraint policy, the United States has scrupulously lived within the SALT I and II agreements governing strategic offensive arms. The United States has fully kept its part of the bargain. ~~(S)~~

By contrast, we have found and reported to the Congress that the Soviet Union has repeatedly violated its arms control obligations, as fully documented in comprehensive reports to the Congress on this subject in January 1984 and February 1985. While the Soviets have observed some provisions of existing arms control agreements, they have violated important elements of those agreements and associated political commitments. ~~(S)~~

-- With respect to the unratified SALT II agreement, these violations include the testing and deployment of a second new ICBM, the SS-X-25, and the encryption of telemetry during missile testing which impedes verification of agreements by national technical means. The Soviet Union has also probably violated this same agreement regarding the prohibition on deploying SS-16 ICBMs. Serious concerns also remain unresolved with respect to the overall numbers of strategic nuclear delivery vehicle (SNDVs) maintained by the Soviet Union, the RV-to-throwweight ratio of the SS-X-25 demonstrated during testing, improvements in the intercontinental capability of the BACKFIRE bomber, and the throwweight associated with a Soviet SLBM. ~~(S)~~

-- Additionally, the pattern of Soviet noncompliance with existing agreements extends well beyond SALT II. The Soviet Union is engaged in the construction of a large phased array radar in central Siberia in violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. When added to other Soviet ABM related activities, including concurrent testing of air defense and ABM components and the development of mobile ABM components, the U.S. has cause for concern about Soviet preparations for a prohibited territorial ABM defense. The Soviet Union has also engaged in significant violations of both the Geneva Protocol on Chemical Weapons and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We also judge that it has violated both the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the terms of the Helsinki Final Act. It is also likely that the Soviets have also violated the nuclear testing yield limit of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty. ~~(S)~~

-- Even with respect to SALT I, where we have found the Soviets have complied with the letter of the agreement, we have concerns about their compliance with the spirit of the agreement. For example, after dismantling YANKEE class nuclear ballistic missile carrying submarines to comply with SALT I constraints, they have already converted one such submarine into a submarine longer than the original, and carrying modern, long-range sea-launched cruise missiles. While not a violation of the letter of SALT I, the resulting submarine constitutes a threat to U.S. and Allied security similar to the original YANKEE-class submarine. ~~(S)~~

These are very crucial issues, for to have effective arms control requires seriousness about compliance. The pattern of Soviet violations increasingly affects our national security and raises uncertainty about the forces the United States will require in the future. But, perhaps even more significant than the immediate military consequences of the violations themselves, they raise fundamental concerns about the integrity of the arms control process, concerns that, if uncorrected, undercut the integrity and viability of arms control as an instrument to assist in ensuring a secure and stable future world. (X)

The United States has consistently employed all appropriate diplomatic channels, including the U.S./Soviet Standing Consultative Commission (SCC), to press the Soviet Union strongly to explain or cease those activities which are of concern to us. In doing so, we have made it absolutely clear that we expect the Soviet Union to take positive steps to correct their noncompliance and resolve our compliance concerns in order to maintain the integrity of existing agreements and to establish the positive environment necessary for the successful negotiation of new agreements. (X)

Unfortunately, despite long and repeated U.S. efforts to resolve these issues, the Soviet Union has neither provided satisfactory explanations nor undertaken corrective action. Instead, Soviet violations have continued and expanded as the Soviets have continued to build their strategic forces. Consequently, the Soviet Union has not been, and is not now, exercising the equal restraint upon which our interim restraint policy has been conditioned. Such Soviet behavior is fundamentally inimical to the future of arms control and to the security of this country and that of our allies. (X)

The United States will continue to pursue vigorously with the Soviet Union the resolution of our concerns over Soviet noncompliance. In this effort, rationalization of such Soviet activities can only encourage further violations by the Soviet Union. We cannot impose upon ourselves a double standard that amounts to unilateral treaty compliance. (X)

As a minimum, in the case of irreversible Soviet violations, we must make appropriate and proportionate responses that deny the military benefits of these violations to the Soviet Union. In the case of Soviet violations that the Soviets can correct, we should develop and keep available comparable proportionate responses that both provide incentives to the Soviets to take positive steps to correct the situation, and which allow us to hedge against the military consequences of Soviet violations should the Soviet Union fail to take the necessary corrective actions. (X)

In this context, the United States will develop and, as needed, implement proportionate responses to Soviet noncompliance

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as necessary to ensure the security of the United States and its allies and to provide real incentives to the Soviet Union to take the positive, concrete steps required to resolve our concerns.

To ensure our fundamental national security and as a baseline for further U.S. action, the integrity and continuity of the U.S. strategic modernization program must be maintained. If the modernization of the ICBM leg of our strategic TRIAD is not fully implemented, as called for in our comprehensive strategic modernization program and recommended by the Scowcroft Commission, we will have to reassess all aspects of our plans to meet our basic national security needs.

While recognizing the seriousness of the problems cited above, we must not lose sight of basic U.S. goals which remain unchanged. During the next ten years, the U.S. objective is a radical reduction in the levels and the power of existing and planned offensive nuclear arms, as well as the stabilization of the relationship between nuclear offensive and defensive arms, whether on earth or in space. We are even now looking forward to a period of transition to a more stable world, with greatly reduced levels of nuclear arms and an enhanced ability to deter war based upon the increasing contribution of non-nuclear defenses against offensive nuclear arms. A world free of the threat of military aggression and free of nuclear arms is an ultimate objective on which we, the Soviet Union, and all other nations can agree.

I continue strongly to believe that the path to achieving these goals would be an agreement based on the far reaching nuclear arms reduction proposal we have tabled at the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks in Geneva. The best approach to rapidly moving to a safer, more stable and more secure world would surely be for both sides to make sharp reductions in their strategic offensive arsenals and, in particular, to eliminate large numbers of the most destabilizing weapons -- strategic ballistic missiles -- by agreeing to a verifiable aggregate ceiling of 5,000 warheads on the land-based and sea-based ballistic missiles of both sides.

Unfortunately, the Soviet Union to date has shown little real interest in restraining the growth of its nuclear arms -- let alone in achieving meaningful reductions or in making progress toward a verifiable, equitable accord which requires such real reductions. To the contrary, in spite of the seriousness and flexibility demonstrated by our negotiators in Geneva in the new negotiations begun this year, the Soviet Union has actually regressed from negotiating positions it had previously taken and has adopted a largely intransigent posture which severely impedes progress. We must, however, remain determined to pursue a productive dialogue with the Soviet Union aimed at reducing the risk of war through the adoption of

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meaningful measures which improve security, stability and predictability. ~~(S)~~

It remains in the interest of the United States to establish an interim framework of truly mutual restraint on strategic offensive arms as we pursue with renewed vigor our goal of real reductions in the size of existing nuclear arsenals through the ongoing negotiations in Geneva. The U.S. cannot establish such a framework alone. It will require the Soviet Union to take the positive, concrete steps called for above to correct their noncompliance, resolve our other compliance concerns, and reverse or substantially reduce their unparalleled and unwarranted military build-up. So far, the Soviet Union has not chosen to move in this direction. However, in the interest of ensuring that every opportunity to establish the secure, stable future we seek is fully explored, I am prepared to go the extra mile in the direction of trying to establish an interim framework of true, mutual restraint. ~~(S)~~

Therefore, to provide the Soviets the opportunity to join us in establishing an interim framework of truly mutual restraint which could support ongoing negotiations, I have decided that the United States will continue to refrain from undercutting existing strategic arms agreements to the extent that the Soviet Union exercises comparable restraint and provided that the Soviet Union actively pursues arms reductions agreements in the currently ongoing Nuclear and Space Talks in Geneva. The United States will constantly review the implications of this interim policy on the long term security interests of the United States and its allies. In doing so, we will consider Soviet actions to resolve our concerns with the pattern of Soviet noncompliance, continued growth in the strategic force structure of the Soviet Union, and Soviet seriousness in the ongoing negotiations. ~~(S)~~

As an integral part of the implementation of this policy, we must also take those steps required to assure the national security of the United States and our allies made necessary by Soviet noncompliance. Appropriate and proportionate responses to Soviet noncompliance are also called for to make it perfectly clear to Moscow that violations of arms control arrangements entail real costs. Therefore, the United States will develop appropriate and proportionate responses and it will take those actions necessary in response to, and as a hedge against the military consequences of, uncorrected Soviet violations of existing arms control agreements. ~~(S)~~

Certain Soviet violations are, by their very nature, irreversible. Such is the case with respect to the Soviet Union's flight-testing and deployment of the SS-X-25 missile, a second new type of ICBM prohibited by the unratified SALT II agreement. Since the noncompliance associated with the

development of this missile cannot, at this point, be corrected by the Soviet Union, the United States, therefore, reserves the right to respond appropriately, and the United States will do so in a proportionate manner at the appropriate time. The MIDGETMAN small ICBM program is particularly relevant in this regard. (X)

Other Soviet activities involving noncompliance may be reversible and can be corrected by Soviet action. In these instances, we will go the extra mile and provide the Soviet Union additional time to take such required corrective action. As we monitor Soviet behavior for evidence of the positive, concrete steps needed on their part to correct these activities, I direct the Department of Defense to conduct a comprehensive assessment aimed at identifying specific actions which the United States could take to accelerate or augment as necessary the U.S. strategic modernization program in proportionate response to, and as a hedge against the military consequences of, those Soviet violations of existing arms agreements which the Soviets fail to correct. (X)

In addition to the development of appropriate and proportionate U.S. military responses in the face of uncorrected Soviet noncompliance, this review should also consider the consequences of continued Soviet force growth as indicated in the most recent National Intelligence Estimate on this subject, the alterations to the ICBM portion of the U.S. strategic modernization program which have resulted from recent Congressional action, and the issue of how the second 50 PEACEKEEPER missiles should appropriately be based. Soviet behavior during rounds II and III of the Nuclear and Space Talks should also be taken fully into account. (X)

In this context, as potential U.S. future actions are assessed, certain criteria will be used. The options should be designed as proportionate responses to specific instances of uncorrected Soviet noncompliance, hedging against the military consequences of such Soviet noncompliance. They need not necessarily be equivalent types of actions. In fact, such tit-for-tat responses are less useful. Rather, options should attempt to deny the Soviets the potential benefits of their noncompliance, and, to the extent possible, provide incentives to the Soviets to correct their noncompliant activity. In all cases, the primary focus must and will remain upon options that underwrite deterrence, enhance stability, and can be directly tied to the specific requirements of our national security. In this regard, the U.S. goal is not, per se, to build additional forces, but to use these options to ensure our security in the face of uncorrected Soviet noncompliance and to provide incentives to the Soviets to correct their noncompliance and join us in establishing a meaningful interim framework of mutual restraint. (X)

The results of this review should be provided for my consideration by November 15, 1985. This should provide

sufficient time for me to consider U.S. options with respect to our policy as we approach the date at which the unratified SALT II Treaty would have expired on December 31, 1985, and subsequent milestones that would occur under a "no undercut" policy. It should also provide sufficient time to consider U.S. programmatic options in direct response to instances of uncorrected Soviet noncompliance, if needed, in submitting the FY 87 Defense Program to the Congress in early 1986. (S)

To provide adequate time for the Soviets to demonstrate by their actions a commitment to join us in an interim framework of true mutual restraint, and unless the strategic situation changes, the U.S. will plan to deactivate and disassemble according to agreed procedures an existing POSEIDON SSBN as the seventh U.S. Ohio-class submarine puts to sea later this year. However, as a part of the report required above, the Department of Defense will review and evaluate the range of options available to the U.S. for handling similar milestones (including the sea trials of additional Ohio-class submarines and the deployment of the 121st U.S. ALCM carrying heavy bomber) in the future. The Department will keep open all future U.S. programmatic options for handling such milestones as they occur. As these later milestones are reached, I will assess the overall situation and make a final determination of the U.S. course of action on a case-by-case basis in light of the overall situation and Soviet actions in meeting the conditions cited above. (S)

I firmly believe that if we are to put the arms reduction process on a firm, lasting foundation, our focus must remain on making best use of the promise provided by the currently ongoing negotiations in Geneva. The policy outlined above involving the establishment of an interim framework for truly mutual restraint and proportionate U.S. response to uncorrected Soviet noncompliance is specifically designed to go the extra mile in giving the Soviet Union the opportunity to join us in this endeavor. My hope is that if the Soviets will do so, we will jointly be able to make progress in framing equitable and verifiable agreements involving real reductions in the size of existing nuclear arsenals through the ongoing Geneva negotiations. Such an achievement would not only provide the best and most permanent constraint on the growth of nuclear arsenals, but it would begin the process of reducing the size of these arsenals. (S)

This directive supersedes the guidance with respect to U.S. interim restraint policy provided in National Security Decision Directive Number 36, U.S. Approach to START Negotiations - II, dated May 25, 1982. (S)