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SYSTEM II

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

August 25, 1986

~~SECRET~~~~UNCLASSIFIED~~National Security Decision
Directive Number 236INTERIM RESTRAINT POLICY~~SECRET~~U.S. Interim Restraint Policy

In my August 19 National Security Decision Directive (NSDD-232) on "Preparing for the Next NST Round," I stated that I remain fully committed to my May 27 decision that, in the future, the United States must base decisions regarding its strategic force structure on the nature and magnitude of the threat posed by Soviet strategic forces and not on standards contained in the SALT structure, which has been undermined by Soviet noncompliance. I noted that SALT II was a flawed agreement which was never ratified, which would have expired if it had been ratified, and which continues to be seriously violated by the Soviet Union, while the SALT I Interim Offensive Agreement was unequal, has expired, and is also being violated by the Soviet Union. ~~SECRET~~

Concerning future U.S. actions, I noted that, as I indicated on May 27, I intend to continue deployment of U.S. heavy bombers with cruise missiles beyond the 131st aircraft, as an appropriate response, without dismantling additional U.S. systems as compensation under the terms of the SALT II Treaty. Since the United States is retiring two Poseidon submarines this summer, we will remain technically in observance with the terms of the SALT II Treaty until that event near the end of the year. I have requested that the Secretary of Defense inform me in advance of the exact timing of any action that would result in exceeding SALT II limits. ~~SECRET~~

In my May 27 decision I stated that the United States will exercise utmost restraint, seeking to meet its strategic needs, given the Soviet buildup, by means that minimize incentives for continuing Soviet offensive force growth. In the longer term, this is one of the major motives in our pursuit of the Strategic Defense Initiative. As we modernize, we will continue to retire older forces as our national security requirements permit. I do not anticipate any appreciable numerical growth in U.S. strategic offensive forces and assuming no significant change in the threat we face, as we implement the strategic modernization program. Additionally, the United States will not deploy more strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs) or more strategic ballistic missile warheads than does the Soviet Union. ~~SECRET~~

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under provisions of E.O. 12356
by S. Tilley, National Security Council~~SECRET~~

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My basic message has been that the two sides need to build a sound new foundation of truly mutual restraint and real arms reductions. I have emphasized that we continue to seek constructive Soviet action as we work to substitute a truly mutual framework of restraint for one that was not working and that was increasingly obsolete. We therefore continue to seek Soviet action in each of the three major areas which I initially identified in June, 1985, i.e.: (1) the correction of Soviet noncompliance; (2) the reversal of the Soviet military buildup; and (3) serious Soviet negotiations in Geneva. At the same time, I have made clear that no policy or framework of interim restraint is a substitute for an arms reduction agreement, and that my highest priority remains the achievement of an agreement on significant, equitable, and verifiable reductions in offensive nuclear arms. ~~(S)~~

Interim Restraint Study

We hope that our interim restraint policy will put the arms control process on a more constructive foundation and will make the best use of the promise provided by the ongoing arms reduction negotiations in Geneva. We do so even though at the Special Session of the U.S.-Soviet Standing Consultative Commission this July, the Soviet Union rejected my call to join us in an interim framework of truly mutual restraint and criticized our approach as unfair. ~~(S)~~

As we put SALT behind us and look to the future with a focus on the Geneva negotiations, and notwithstanding the Soviet Union's regrettable rejection, we need to consider more specifically how the interim framework of truly mutual restraint we have proposed can be developed and implemented in a manner consistent with the established policy guidance above and supportive of our objectives in the START negotiations and the conceptual approach we have presented in those negotiations. ~~(S)~~

I therefore request that a study be conducted on a closely held, priority basis that addresses the following questions:

1. In the context of a proposal for a mutual interim restraint regime, what numerical limitations (in addition to, or as substitutes for, the two measures that I have proposed as unilateral steps) and conceptually consistent with our START reductions proposals could the U.S. consider?

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2. In addition to these numerical limits, what supporting definitions, counting rules, notifications, and procedures (to include dismantlement and destruction procedures) should the U.S. consider?
3. Should the U.S. consider other qualitative limits and restrictions on new types of system in the context of an arrangement that the U.S. views as intended to be of very limited duration, i.e., until we can, in the near future, implement a START agreement, from which it should not divert the two sides.
4. If such elements were considered appropriate and if agreement, in principle, on any of these elements were reached with the Soviet Union, would the U.S. prefer documenting such agreement in the form of a treaty, an executive agreement, or by parallel political commitments (such as were made regarding SALT in 1982)? ~~xx~~

In answering the above questions, the study should also include the following:

1. An assessment of the answers to each of the above questions in terms of their precedential implications both on our ability quickly to conclude a START agreement and on our ability to obtain the terms we seek in such an agreement;
2. An assessment, led by the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, of the answers in terms of their impact on U.S. and Allied security and military sufficiency;
3. An assessment, led by the Director, Central Intelligence, of the answers in terms of the problems of verification posed by Soviet noncompliance; and
4. An assessment, led by the Director, Central Intelligence, of the answers in terms of their impact on our ability to assess the level and quality of Soviet forces under such arrangements. ~~xx~~

The study, to be conducted under the direction of the Arms Control Support Group, should be submitted to the National Security Council by September 17. ~~xx~~

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