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NATIONAL SECURITY DEPARTMENT
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ARMY CONTROL DISCUSSIONS (U)

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The Soviet Union has recently given us some indications that it may be ready to offer new ideas or show additional flexibility with respect to the major nuclear arms control areas addressed at Reykjavik and those under negotiation at the Nuclear and Space Talks (NST) in Geneva. Based upon the advice of my most senior advisors, I would like to probe this possibility quietly if appropriate opportunities present themselves. (TS)

The U.S. objective in any such activity is to secure reductions in nuclear arms by means of verifiable agreements and to see if the Soviet Union wishes to offer any new ideas to that end. The primary task is to determine whether the Soviet Union has additional flexibility that would permit progress to be made at the negotiating table in Geneva. (TS)

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Assuming that the Soviet Union is sincere in this effort, we should anticipate that it will take time to assess with confidence the indications that have been provided by the Soviets and to achieve the objectives outlined above. Therefore, the pace of U.S. actions should be adjusted to this judgment. Our first task is to elicit and listen carefully to what the Soviet Union may have to offer. In doing so, we should probe as necessary to understand fully the range of Soviet flexibility, including Soviet interest in a commitment not to deploy advanced defenses for a period shorter than the 10-year period suggested at Reykjavik. Any probing should be done in a manner that cannot be construed to commit the U.S. to any specific course of action at this time. (TS)

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At the same time, we should be prepared to indicate that the U.S. still believes the best course of action for both sides would be to agree upon and implement the 50% reduction in U.S. and Soviet strategic forces in five years as discussed and agreed at the highest levels, in Reykjavik. During such period of reductions, the United States would be prepared to continue negotiations in the appropriate fora on the full range of U.S. and Soviet proposals -- from further reductions in nuclear offensive forces with a transition to an increasing reliance on, and deployment of, advanced defenses, to associated issues involving conventional and chemical forces. If asked, we should make it clear that we also believe that the interests of both sides would be served by moving forward with an agreement in the INF area as soon as possible, independent of progress in other areas. (TS)

Ronald Reagan

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