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July 28, 1988

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION  
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 311

US-SOVIET DEFENSE AND MILITARY RELATIONS (X)

As a result of recent progress in our bilateral relations with the Soviet Union, and coincident with the recent Summit meetings, the United States and the Soviet Union have opened a new set of contacts between our respective defense and military establishments. To date, two sets of discussions have occurred at the ministerial level between the Secretary of Defense and the Soviet Minister of Defense, the Secretary of the Air Force has visited the USSR, and one exchange visit has occurred between the two nations' military leaders. Other discussions and exchanges are being planned for the future. (X)

These contacts offer an opportunity to contribute to a more stable relationship between our two countries -- one that reduces the prospect of confrontation and the risk of military conflict. At the same time, however, we must be prudent about the serious and continuing threat that the Soviet Union represents to us and our Allies, and be determined to develop the new relations with caution, with realistic expectations, and with diligent preparations to ensure a sound, coherent contribution. (X)

To provide overall guidance as we pursue this new opportunity, the following goals will be used to focus US government efforts:

- to gain greater access to and understanding of the Soviet defense establishment at all levels -- policies, doctrines, programs, budgets and capabilities, as well as the outlook, abilities, and relationships of key personalities;
- to influence the Soviets to subject their military policy, programs, budget and activity to more openness and honest debate;

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- to influence Soviet behavior toward our security objectives, both by demonstrating the capability of our forces, and by increasing Soviet understanding of our defense policies, doctrines, programs, and budgets (taking appropriate security precautions);
- to reduce the possibility of incidents of dangerous military activity where our forces are operating in close proximity to each other in peacetime; and
- to lend support, by means other than negotiations, to US and Allied positions advanced elsewhere in formal negotiations on such issues as arms control, human rights, regional issues, and other topics on our agenda with the Soviet Union. ~~NA~~

As these goals indicate, our defense and military relations should evolve within, and be fully supportive of, the overall US-Soviet bilateral relationship, particularly our established four-part agenda, wherein these new contacts and discussions will become a part of our bilateral exchanges. ~~(X)~~

In pursuit of the foregoing goals, an Interagency Group (IG) and a Senior Interagency Group (SIG) on US-Soviet Defense and Military Relations will be established. They will be responsible to develop and coordinate the policy guidance necessary to effect these developing bilateral contacts and to ensure strict reciprocity is maintained in all aspects of these defense and military relations. These bodies will also ensure that all exchange activities conform to the stated goals and that USG efforts proceed in a unified manner by providing for effective coordination at each stage in the planning process. All public and private statements of US policy, visits and proposed agreements developed in the course of discussions with the Soviets will be vetted through the IG and, as necessary, the SIG. The SIG will consist of representatives of the Department of State; Department of Defense; National Security Council; Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the Central Intelligence Agency. It will be chaired by the representative of the National Security Council. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy will serve as Executive Secretary of the SIG and chair the IG. The IG will be composed of members appointed by the members of the SIG. ~~NA~~

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