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INFORMATION

February 1, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN M. POINDEXTER

SUBJECT: Background Material for the February 3, NSPG
Meeting on Responding to Gorbachev (S)

General Secretary Gorbachev wrote you on January 14 about a plan for the elimination of nuclear weapons through a three phase schedule by the year 2000. He also went public with this plan shortly thereafter. The Soviet plan has a large measure of propaganda, but its broad nature and defined timelines have optical appeal which must be handled carefully in formulating our response. You received a background package last weekend on this subject and the attached material has been further refined for your reading this weekend.

A meeting of appropriate Cabinet officials is scheduled for Monday at 11:15 to permit you to hear their recommended approach before deciding; their written views are compiled at Tab E. In sum, OSD favors not altering our current positions while discrediting the Soviet plan and the JCS have recently joined in this view. The State Department would be far more forthcoming in adapting to parts of the Soviet plan and putting forth new US positions in Geneva this round in each of the three negotiating fora. ACDA, your NST negotiators and my own recommendations fall between these two approaches, in which we reframe the issue in our own terms and move with a substantive change to our INF position only.

Attachment: Tab A -- Issue Paper for NSPG
Tab B -- Options Matrix of the OWL 20 Paper
Tab C -- Summary of the Soviet Proposal
Tab D -- Military Implications
Tab E -- Views of NSPG Principals

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Responding to Gorbachev's January Proposals (S)

ISSUE: The issue to be addressed at Monday's NSPG is how should the US respond to the January 14, 1986, initiative by General Secretary Gorbachev.

ALTERNATIVES: Three alternative options have been developed.

Option 1. Express reservations about the Soviet "plan". Explore new elements of the Soviet proposal in the appropriate negotiating fora, but not put forward any changes to our current positions in the START, INF or Defense and Space Talks (DST) areas in response to this Soviet initiative.

Option 2. Protect our option to advance, at the appropriate time, a US proposal which reframes the core of the Soviet plan accepting some basic elements, (e.g., a commitment to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons but with no specific timeline and agreement that the initial step should be US/USSR reductions), but rejecting discussion of the Soviet proposal of subsequent phases or the details associated with such out-year phases.

Option 3. Go beyond Option 2 and propose substantive changes to all three US positions (START, INF and DST) during the current round.

Each of the options would attempt to maintain the focus on keeping priority on executing the mandate given at the last summit to pursue areas of common ground — 50% reduction in nuclear arms appropriately applied, and an interim INF agreement.

Paper copies of the larger option summary charts which have been prepared to support NSPG discussion are provided at Tab B.

DISCUSSION: At the heart of the Soviet proposal (summarized at Tab C) is General Secretary Gorbachev's proposed "plan" for achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of the century.

Certain elements of the Soviet "plan" reflect positions offered by the US to the Soviets over the past 5 years including: the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons; handling the nuclear forces of others only after we have moved bilaterally to 50% reductions (as we define them); and the need to go beyond National Technical Means (NTM) as required for effective verification.

On the other hand, the Soviet "plan" narrowly focuses on only the total elimination of all nuclear weapons by 1999, making that a goal in itself. It does not address the corresponding deterrence and stability rationale for weapons or the associated mechanisms including equitable reductions, compliance and SDI, that will be needed either to eliminate the underlying security requirements for nuclear weapons or replace the contribution now made by the nuclear weapons. It offers no schedule for the resolution of existing regional conflicts and differences and, in the process, sets up a situation in which, if the elimination of nuclear weapons by that date were taken as a serious possibility, it undercuts US and allied nuclear modernization. Key national security considerations associated with the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons are summarized at Tab D.

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The potential relationship of this general conceptual issue to the upcoming summit should be considered. Those who support Options 2 (ACDA, Ambassador Rowny, and your three NST negotiators) and Option 3 (State) want to protect the option of using the US response to reframe the Soviet proposal along US terms so as to give us the possibility of some limited general agreement about the elimination of nuclear weapons which could be reached at the next summit. Those who support Option 1 (the Secretary of Defense and the JCS) believe that if we pursue this approach, it will cause the summit to become, in effect, a deadline for reaching some agreement with the Soviets, and, therefore, it will be much more difficult to deal with the Soviet proposal, protect our interests, and pursue our agenda.

In addition to deciding how we should respond to the general Soviet framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons by 1999, we also need to consider the issue of whether the US should now move in START, INF, Defense and Space, or in any other major arms control area as a result of the Soviet initiative.

START. The Gorbachev proposal does not involve any changes in the previous Soviet START position. The Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, ACDA, Ambassador Rowny, and our START negotiator, Ambassador Tower, believe that the US should not adjust the US START position, tabled only last November. The Secretary of State and Ambassador Nitze believe that we should change our START position by altering our proposed ban on mobile ICBMs so as to permit single warhead mobile ICBMs if the proper verification measures can be worked out. State feels that this would not only allow us to make some modest movement in Geneva, but would help with Congress (especially with those who support our own MIDGETMAN program). Option 3, supported by State, would direct such a move in the START area.

INF. The Gorbachev package combines an important shift in INF that is both potentially encouraging and potentially troublesome with some familiar and unacceptable elements. The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs feel that the Soviets have not made a move in INF that deserves a response at this time. The Secretary of State, ACDA, Ambassadors Nitze and Rowny, and our INF negotiator, Ambassador Glitman, believe the US should respond promptly by proposing the elimination of US and Soviet LRINF in Europe, coupled with significant reductions of SS-20s in Asia (at least 50%) and subsequent elimination of all SS-20s in Asia. Option 2 would direct such a move. Option 3, supported by State, would also direct such a move but go further and make it part of a package corresponding moves which also involve both the START and Defense and Space areas.

Defense and Space. The parts of the new Soviet proposal that address matters in Defense and Space neither advance the negotiations nor offer anything positive to which we could respond. The Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, ACDA, Ambassador Rowny, and our Defense and Space negotiator, Ambassador Kampleman, believe that the US should not adjust its position. The Secretary of State and Ambassador Nitze believe that we should change our position by proposing that neither side seek amendment of the ABM Treaty during the period in which reductions to 50% of offensive nuclear forces take place and agree to do nothing further to erode confidence in it. Option 3, supported by State, would direct such a move in the Defense and Space area.

AGENCY VIEWS: Tab E includes a series of memoranda which contain agency views.

- Option 1 is supported by the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Option 2 is supported by ACDA, Ambassador Rowny and your NST negotiators (Ambassadors Kampleman, Tower and Glitman).
- Option 3 is supported by the Secretary of State and Ambassador Nitze.

The views of the Director of Central Intelligence have not been provided as of this time.

NSC STAFF VIEW. What is needed now is a preliminary decision on the options so that we can begin immediate consultation with Allies, hear their views, and then reach a final US position. NSC staff would recommend that Option 2 be selected.

— Option 1 is too negative. It fails to address the potential challenge that we may face should the Gorbachev initiative gain momentum over time. It also fails to attempt to exploit the opportunity that the Gorbachev initiative may represent to make some useful progress. Finally, it forecloses the possibility of using this opportunity to reframe the Soviet proposal into something that could be usefully used at the next summit.

— Option 3 goes too far. The Soviet initiative does not, on its own merit, warrant an additional US move in either the START or the Defense and Space area. Nor does the public response to the Gorbachev initiative demand that we make an across the board move. We just made a major move last November, and before making the changes in START or Defense and Space contained in Option 3, we would prefer to do a more complete analysis of these and other (perhaps better) potential options.

— Option 2 would put us in a position to make a US proposal which reframes the Soviet "plan" in US terms and let us try to pocket any serious Soviet movement in the INF area.

Executing Option 2. If Option 2 were selected, from February 5th through the 12th, we would consult with our allies. Until this is completed, no US decision would be announced or implemented with the Soviets. Option 2 would be presented as US "preliminary thinking" so that allies would feel that their views have been fully taken into account. With allied views heard, and assuming no unforeseen allied reactions, we would incorporate the thrust of Option 2 in correspondence responding to Gorbachev. We would not make a specific proposal for an agreement on the points associated with Option 2 at this time, but lay the foundation for such a step as the summit nears. Finally, (by February 15th) we would issue instructions to the US delegation in Geneva directing the US move in the INF area only.

Annex D - National Security Implications
of Eliminating Nuclear Weapons by 1999

Our current national strategy depends, to a great extent, on the contribution of offensive nuclear weapons (both strategic and non-strategic). While we are committed to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we have always noted that translating this into reality will take a long time since we will either have to change the international situation to the point that the contribution of nuclear weapons is no longer needed (e.g., ideological and regional tensions resolved) or alternative means of maintaining security are in place. Any commitment we make to a detailed plan for the elimination of nuclear weapons must be viewed as an extremely serious step which we must be sure we can execute and safely live with because, once made, it may generate pressures (budgetary, arms control, political) which could force the US unilaterally toward such a course.

We are equally committed to NATO strategy (14/3) which also depends heavily on the contribution of both strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. NATO 14/3 is, in many respects, a somewhat fragile, political strategy -- but absolutely essential to maintaining alliance cohesion. In the context of the SDI debate, for example, the FRG offered the principle (which we endorsed) that unless and until an alternative to current strategy is found and agreed upon, it is essential that full support be provided to 14/3. Any commitment to a schedule such as that proposed by the Soviets would immediately call into question the future of 14/3. Once again, this would be a most serious step, and one that would require extensive Allied consultation.

If the current regional imbalances in conventional forces are not resolved, there would be little to deter hostile powers from pursuing their interests to the potential detriment of US interests. Significant political, economic, and military commitment would be required to equal the deterrent potential of relatively inexpensive nuclear weapons. Furthermore, elimination of nuclear weapons by the current nuclear powers could place them at risk from those that have not acknowledged possession, but may in fact possess, or gain access to, such weapons.

The direct impact of the Soviet plan would be to derail Western modernization. Some of the provisions, by simply being given the status of real "possibilities", could achieve the same result. For example, if the elimination of British and French systems is roughly 8 years away, why should the UK invest its limited resources on the Trident D-5 missile? Similarly, if tactical systems are also going to be gone in the same time frame, why should NATO pay the fiscal and political costs of modernizing these systems? Why should the US (or the US and its allies) waste precious funds and take the political heat of continuing with SDI? And why pay for systems like MX, MIDGEIMAN and the TRIDENT D-5?

The US is committed ultimately to eliminating nuclear weapons. These observations are not intended to undercut this goal. But, to point out the dangers we face if this goal is pursued in isolation as proposed by the Soviet "plan". Total elimination of nuclear weapons must be accompanied by actions which obviate the requirements for those weapons, including resolution of regional differences, the correction of military asymmetries, and a fundamental change in orientation and ambitions of the Soviet leadership.

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