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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

National Security Planning Group Meeting
February 3, 1986, 11:15 a.m.-12:00 noon, Situation Room

SUBJECT: Arms Control -- Responding to Gorbachev (S)

PARTICIPANTS:

The President

The Vice President

State:

Secretary George P. Shultz
Ambassador Paul Nitze
Ambassador Edward Rowny

ACDA:

Director Kenneth Adelman

White House

Mr. Donald T. Regan
Admiral John M. Poindexter

Treasury:

Secretary James A. Baker, III

NSC:

Colonel Robert E. Linhard
Captain William H. Wright

OSD:

Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger

Justice:

Attorney General Edwin Meese

JCS:

Admiral William T. Crowe

CIA:

Director William J. Casey

Minutes

Admiral Poindexter opened the meeting by characterizing the incoming letter from General Secretary Gorbachev. He pointed out that it was subtle and clever, making some points that would appeal to certain domestic US and Soviet audiences, some that would attempt to drive wedges between the US and Allies. The thrust of Gorbachev's letter was seen by some as a purely publicity ploy, while others viewed some areas as unique opportunities to move arms control negotiations forward. (S)

He noted that, in addition to the substance of the letter and the US response, the meeting should address the timing of delivery and a public diplomacy plan to handle public information about any response. Admiral Poindexter then outlined the options for the President's response, all agreed that a response should maintain a priority on pursuing "common ground": 50 percent

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reduction in nuclear arms and an interim INF agreement. All also agreed that our negotiations should criticize those elements of the Soviet proposal that have been previously offered and rejected at Geneva. (S)

Admiral Poindexter then outlined the areas of US options that required discussions and decision at this meeting. One option (Option 1) would have the US express reservations about the Soviet "plan", explore any new elements as appropriate fora, not change the US position, and essentially label the Soviet effort a "publicity stunt." Another option (Option 2) would be to reframe the Soviet proposal in US terms, reserving our opportunity to advance such a reframed proposal where appropriate, and move in the INF area to see whether we can use the Soviet proposal to move toward US and Allied goals. A third option (Option 3) would be to have the US move in all three negotiating areas, making changes in the US NST position during the current round. (TS)

Secretary Weinberger advocated keeping our present (November) positions at the Geneva negotiations. He pointed out that the Soviet "proposal" contained a lot of old Soviet positions. However, Secretary Weinberger stated that he did not favor openly labeling the Soviet action a "publicity stunt." To do so would lessen the momentum at Geneva, which the US should not allow to happen. The US should keep the focus away from the date for abolishing nuclear weapons. He pointed out that one of the most unfair points in the Soviet proposal, which was no change from early Soviet positions, was the way they wished to count "strategic" systems. Secretary Weinberger pointed out that the US response should focus on our proposals, which were still valid. He argued that Option 2 offered major concessions. It would accept the 510 Soviet SS-20 warheads in Asia, warheads that are mobile and could still be employed against Europe. It would prohibit French and UK modernization. Option 3, in addition to the INF concessions, would give up our ability to amend the ABM Treaty, which would kill SDI by banning research. Admiral Poindexter offered the clarification that the INF portion of both Options 1 and 2 sought an interim INF agreement, and would not accept the Soviet notion of "freezing" French and UK nuclear forces. (TS)

Admiral Crowe stated that the JCS had sympathy for Option 2. They agreed that the Asian SS-20 situation was particularly bad. The present basing locations allowed some of the SS-20s in Asia to strike parts of Scandinavia, Turkey, and even, at extreme range, West Germany. Secretary Shultz pointed out that SS-20s could be reconfigured to achieve strategic range if one of their three warheads were removed. (TS)

Director Adelman stated his belief that the Soviets had done a lot of propaganda in their proposal. He said they had, however,

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moved some on their "zero INF" option by omitting direct reference to UK and French force levels. He believed that the US needed to "pick up" Option 2. At the same time, the US should not change our START position, or we would be negotiating with ourselves. Any move in DST would politically hamstring us on SDI. He believed the ABM Treaty needed to remain in place. Director Adelman stated that US Allies in Asia wanted a 50 percent cut in Soviet Asian SS-20s as part of an INF agreement. He pointed out that the Soviet appeared to have moved a little toward accepting on-site inspections in INF, at least in some public speeches. Perhaps the way to ensure a real Soviet move would be to offer a draft INF treaty. Then if the Soviets backed away from inspections, the US could challenge them to live with their own speeches. (S)

Ambassador Rowny spoke in favor of Option 2, arguing that the US should seize the European INF reduction offer and at the same time insist on concurrent reductions in the Soviet Asian forces. He pointed out that it was most important to get agreement on verification details, and Option 2 provided a way to do so. (S)

Secretary Shultz agreed with the previous comments on Option 2. He characterized that option as one that would benefit the President as a man with vision to work for a "greater peace." Gorbachev was trying to steal that image. A phased approach was desirable, even though the US need not spell out a second phase at this time. Any first phase would only involve the US and USSR. In later phases other nuclear powers might take part -- thus the US could reject Gorbachev's comments on UK and French forces for now. The US should provide some details of later phases more than just "elimination of nuclear weapons." The US, said Secretary Shultz, needs to make the point that verification is essential, not only for nuclear weapons agreements but also for conventional fora such as MBFR and CDE. The US should also point out that the world would be more peaceful if we had fewer regional flashpoints; there are a number of items we should raise about conventional and chemical weapons arms control. (S)

Secretary Shultz went on to say he saw no sense to be in favor of higher INF totals than the Soviets. Our proposal is already for an interim solution of 140 launchers plus proportional reductions in Asia. Our overall view is for an equal global ceiling, the lower the better. The Soviet proposal for "zero" in Europe ignores Asia. For the US to remain in favor of a global ceiling at lower numbers will be easy to sell to Japan. (S)

Turning to START, Secretary Shultz pointed out that the Soviets have not replied to the US proposal, so there is no need to "dress up" our position. There is, he said, an anomaly in the START positions: we call for a ban on mobile ICBMs when we are planning for MIDGETMAN and possibly MX in a mobile basing mode

which would give us greater survivability. When the US Congress picks up this inconsistency, it hurts in our appropriations. Secretary Shultz said, we have three things we need to protect by extending the time for implementation of a first phase: The UK/French modernization program -- which we can defer to a subsequent stage, which will let initial reductions take place despite such programs; the visible existence of SDI, as insurance that reductions take place because of it -- although at some future stage we will need to discuss with the Soviets questions of possible deployment and the transition to greater reliance on defenses; the ability to reserve ways to identify in the future some way SDI can be integrated into the reductions process. The Soviets, claimed Secretary Shultz, want to eliminate SDI. There is a growing perception that the Soviets are at the negotiations to make SDI go away. As an idea, the US and USSR might both agree not to call for amendment of the ABM Treaty so long as reductions continue. Since the time period under discussion is when SDI deployments won't occur anyway, we could propose that the ABM Treaty remain in force so long as reductions go on. (TS)

Director Casey argued that speculation now on how to incorporate SDI in the negotiations was premature. Option 2, in his opinion, offered the opportunity to "pocket" some Soviet movement while testing the seriousness of Soviet statements about verification. The US task, said Director Casey, was to press ahead to define "effective verification", determining which aspects are or are not militarily significant. Generally, the concept of a 50 percent reduction still could leave the USSR with a capability for a disarming first strike. A call for an extended ABM Treaty would be self-defeating for SDI. Therefore, Director Casey felt we should stick to our present Geneva position on START and DST. He argued that Gorbachev was seeking to undercut the President's broader agenda in arms control and future stability of security. The US should reemphasize the problems with Soviet compliance with agreements they had signed. In all fora, the US needs to stress verification, so the focus does not shift to the Soviet positions, allowing them to dominate the thrust of negotiations. (TS)

Secretary Weinberger argued to seize any positive elements of their INF position, to retain our own INF proposals as presently construed, and to engage in vigorous conversation about verification to "smoke them out." Secretary Shultz intervened to remark that it appeared Secretary Weinberger was supporting the State option. Secretary Weinberger replied that the difference in options was narrow but profound. (S)

Attorney General Meese stated the US should keep our November proposals on the table. He further said he was concerned with the provisions of the Soviet proposal that would argue for a permanent mismatch in SS-20s: zero in Europe which effectively

meant zero for the US, while the mobility of the Asian SS-20s would permit the USSR to retain an effective force against Europe. He felt the US should concentrate on verification -- it was the greatest place for a breakthrough. Mr. Meese stated his belief that the President must define the course and the goal for SDI. SDI should become a moral imperative for future presidents. (TS)

Ambassador Nitze stated his belief that a primary reason for the letter from Gorbachev was the Soviets felt a psychological need to recapture the "high ground" -- to counter the good position the President had established in November. Thus, there were a lot of elements designed to give the appearance of putting the "ball back in our court" and to curry favor with specific elements of US and Allied publics. However, Ambassador Nitze argued, there are some elements of potential interest in almost all negotiating areas of the letter. The most crucial US decision is to establish our position in INF. (S)

Secretary Baker pointed out that the chess game for world opinion was a central element of the present policy debate. The grandiose Soviet images of "zero weapons" could prove very enticing in the public relations battle. Secretary Baker then stated that he did not see how Option 1 would help the public relations questions. Option 2, however, would not foreclose flexibility on our part, and might have a way to work out the Asian deployment question. He indicated that, in his view, the US could not offer a position that forfeited the Asian balance question. (S)

The President, after hearing the discussion, stated that he agreed with the general thrust of the conversation. He did not believe there was any need for US movement in all three negotiating areas (Option 3). He agreed that in reality "the ball is still in their court" -- but there is a danger in attacking the Soviet generalization as only propaganda. Then the public perceives the issue as: Who really wants to reduce? The President argued that we need to make the Soviets expose the fact that they are not really serious about reductions negotiations. The US should go to the negotiations, point out that the Soviets have made a general, overall offer, and agree on the overall aims of the process. We should emphasize that what the US seeks now is a practical way forward: a way to achieve verification in a concrete agreement, even if such involves a proposal we have already made. The US should emphasize the point that we are trying to find a practical way to move forward in implementing the agreed eventual goals. (TS)

The President further stated that the US does not give up SDI. We should point out that SDI is not for the US alone -- we seek a mutual shift from sole reliance on offensive weapons to an offense-defense mix. We should remember the principle of sharing

SDI at the deployment stage. The President pointed out that all speakers today agreed on the overall goal of SDI. As we continue to develop SDI we need to find a way for SDI to be a protector for all -- perhaps the concept of a "common trigger" where some international group, perhaps the UN, could deploy SDI against anyone who threatened use of nuclear weapons. Every state could use this guarantee. The President noted that we do not have all the answers. When research reveals the practicality of SDI, then we might want to mutually decide what to do. (TS)

Secretary Weinberger stated that, in the meantime, it is vital that the research programs in SDI continue. Anything that restricts research is unacceptable. (S)

The President reiterated that there is no one who wants to curtail SDI. At the same time, he pointed out that there is no guarantee we know how to make SDI work yet. (S)

Secretary Shultz agreed that SDI was the key item. He asked how we envisioned getting from where we are now to a defensive world. He further stated to the President that the US agencies owed a better answer on how to solve the difficult transition problem. (S)

The President said that the US needed to be careful that our position was not propaganda -- if it were, the Soviets would be quick to label it such and negate the value of our position. (S)

Admiral Poindexter pointed out that the discussion had clarified positions and that we now needed to consult with Allies and prepare some refined options for decision. (S)

The President concluded the meeting by stating that it was clear that we needed to work in INF for total elimination of those systems. If the Soviets tried to keep some SS-20s in Asia, perhaps we could counter by putting Pershing II and GLCM systems in Alaska, where they could reach Soviet systems in Asia. The Soviets must know that if there is not complete elimination of INF, we will not eliminate our INF. There should be verifiable measures for destroying INF under an agreement. (S)