

MSG FROM: NSJMP --CPUA TO: Ron Lehman
To: Ron Lehman

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NOTE FROM: JOHN POINDEXTER

SUBJECT: President's Initiative on Arms Control EYES ONLY

This morning at the 0930 the President mentioned that he had been thinking about issuing a call to the nuclear powers for a conference where he would propose calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Bud pointed out the problem with conventional forces in Europe. Bud told the President we would work on a thoughtful paper on this issue. Please do a think piece on this issue. Keep it close hold. Is there any way the European leaders would ever endorse such a move?

cc: NSRCM --CPUA BUD MCFARLANE

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NLRR 107-081-49591

BY AV NARA DATE 4/9/10

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NLRR M07-081-49586 FIVE POWER CONFERENCE

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BY CS NARA DATE 1/9/70

ISSUE: Would it be a good idea for the President of the United States to issue a call for a five-power nuclear disarmament conference to discuss the elimination of all nuclear weapons?

BACKGROUND: In the first half of this century, uncounted tens of millions of people, probably over 100 million, died in so-called conventional wars, largely as a result of world wars spilling out of Western Europe. Since the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of World War II, despite some 120 mostly undeclared wars, there have been no wars in Europe, no world wars and no nuclear wars. Fear of the horrible effects of nuclear weapons may not prevent wars in the Third World, but it has had a major role in preventing the Third World War. Nevertheless, if an all-out nuclear exchange were to occur between the two superpowers, many more people could be killed in a few hours or days than were killed in all the wars of the last one hundred years.

Commitment to nuclear deterrence has remained strong in the West because anxiety about living under this nuclear Sword of Damocles has not overwhelmed the fear of conventional world wars which might result in a world without nuclear weapons. Furthermore, there has been a recognition that, with the existence of nuclear weapons, the Western Democracies have been able to deter the Soviet Union at lower cost and with less militarization of their societies than would have been the case without nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, maintaining a strong and successful deterrent is becoming increasingly difficult for Western democracies in the face of:

(1) increased uncertainty that deterrence can be successfully maintained in future worlds where retaliatory forces are increasingly vulnerable,

(2) fear that, no matter how low the chances of a nuclear war, over a long period of time perhaps by accident or miscalculation, nuclear weapons will be used,

(2) simplistic views to the effect that we possess "overkill" -- far more weapons than we need to deter -- therefore we should cut back on nuclear arms, even accept inferiority,

(3) increased exploitation of nuclear hysteria for partisan political purposes even at the risk of undercutting sound and essential policies and programs,

(4) competition with conventional defense programs,

(5) younger generations which have forgotten the horrors of conventional wars and the lessons of appeasement in the 1930's, and

(6) a resurgence of clerical and legal anti-nuclear morality which is feeding an unhealthy amount of "Better Red than Dead" style calls for unilateral disarmament.

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In the face of these pressures which may weaken nuclear deterrence in the years ahead, how does one:

- (1) strengthen nuclear deterrence,
- (2) substitute for gaps in nuclear deterrence, and/or
- (3) find alternatives to nuclear deterrence for ourselves and our allies.

Strengthening nuclear deterrence must inevitably require major attention so long as we depend on nuclear weapons to prevent war. Strategic and theater modernization programs must continue despite opposition. Undoubtedly the basic doctrine of "flexible response" will continue into the future simply because it has successfully covered a multitude of problems and is highly adaptable to changing circumstances. Still, simply continuing with more of the same may prove inadequate to the challenges of the future.

Plugging the gaps in nuclear deterrence has major two dimensions. First, we are continuing to strengthen deterrence for the U.S. and second, we are strengthening deterrence for our friends and allies around the world. In both cases, the conventional view remains that it is easier and cheaper to strengthen deterrence to prevent war than to take the steps which could provide acceptable security in the event of a major nuclear war. Nevertheless, if our confidence in our ability to prevent nuclear war in the years ahead is reduced, then steps must be taken to reduce the consequences. For the United States this clearly would mean that steps such as strategic defense, civil defense, and damage limiting targeting become even more essential. In many cases, such steps also have an added deterrent effect.

A more likely failure of nuclear deterrence is the failure of the extended nuclear umbrella to prevent conventional attack. The credibility of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent for its allies has been called into question given the massive Soviet strategic and theater nuclear build-up. Thus, an important hedge against the failure of nuclear deterrence must be enhancement of our conventional deterrent and defenses.

Nearly everyone acknowledges that NATO conventional forces need to be enhanced, but such an action is expensive. Many who are now calling for reductions in nuclear arms wish the money to be diverted to conventional arms. Unfortunately, nuclear arms are relatively inexpensive and the same money placed into conventional forces will, in many cases, buy less rather than more deterrent. Worse, many who call for cuts in nuclear arms investment have no intention of supporting major increases in conventional arms.

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The conventional wisdom today is that the most cost effective deterrent comes from a balance of conventional and nuclear forces structured so as to implement the doctrine of "flexible response." Flexible response says simply that the U.S. and its allies will not be the first to use any force, but, if attacked, will respond in an appropriate manner designed to terminate hostilities at the lowest level of destruction with sovereignty intact. If lower levels of defense do not stop the aggression then the West will escalate in a manner which calls into question the ability of the Warsaw Pact to achieve its objectives and/or makes the price of continued aggression unbearable. Escalation could involve the use of nuclear weapons in Europe or the central nuclear forces of the United States, and it could involve the use of these forces by the West first if necessary.

This view has been attacked recently by former Defense Secretary McNamara and others who argue that all nuclear weapons are unuseable. According to this view, we would make clear that they would be used only in response to a major nuclear attack and that, rather than threaten escalation, it would be our policy to retaliate in ways which were less damaging than what we had received. Under this approach, the burden of deterrence would be carried almost entirely by conventional forces.

Critics of the McNamara concept fear that he so undercuts extended nuclear deterrence by depriving it of any credibility that he makes a conventional world war more likely which in turn would make the possibility of a nuclear war actually more likely also. Still, all agree that in an age of nuclear parity or worse, conventional deterrence must be enhanced, especially so as to prevent any Soviet anticipation of a conventional victory so quick that the Alliance would see nuclear retaliation as no longer an option.

Given the uncertain future of nuclear deterrence and the horrible consequences if it should fail, the search for alternatives remains a major goal within the United Nations and among many academicians, churchmen, and private citizens. Indeed, the Arms Control and Disarmament Act of 1961 sets a goal of "ultimate world disarmament," yet few governments have pressed for rapid movement toward major reductions, much less actual disarmament. During UN debates, the Soviet Union still makes an occasional

grandiose call for total nuclear disarmament, but western governments have been unwilling to accept pledges without detailed, verifiable, and enforceable arms control and reductions measures. Confidence in deterrence has been sufficient that no race to abandon nuclear weapons has occurred.

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Moreover, the path from deterrence to disarmament is a very uncertain one, especially in a world populated by militaristic totalitarian regimes and police states. Governments have not been at all certain that a stable balance can be maintained at greatly reduced arms, especially if inequalities exist or in a multi-polar nuclear world. Verification difficulties are tremendous in the face of today's nuclear technologies and large weapons stockpiles. Furthermore, the political difficulties associated with complete nuclear disarmament are getting more difficult rather than less so. Nowhere is this more evident than in discussions of the prospects for a five power nuclear disarmament conference.

The concept of a five-power nuclear disarmament conference is not new, yet it has consistently not found favor among the nuclear powers, as illustrated once again by the cold reception that Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau has received to his recent initiative (Trudeau's overtures to Great Britain, Italy, and the Commonwealth have all received negative responses.) Instead, bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on the one hand and multilateral discussions involving numerous states on the other hand have been the rule. Numerous reasons for this exist:

(1) At today's levels of forces, it is the balance between the superpowers which is the essential measure of stability, and codifying a stable balance at reduced levels requires intense and private negotiations between the two great powers. A five power talk would undercut START and provide more complicated and divisive negotiations in exchange.

(2) The U.S. and its allies fear negotiations in which they may be placed under pressure by the Soviet Union to choose between the deterrent forces of the U.S. and the deterrent forces of nuclear allies such as the British and French. Five-power talks could lead to serious tensions within the NATO alliance, and could even undercut relations with the PRC.

(3) A five nations conference (U.S., U.S.S.R, Britain, France, and China) would not include India which has tested nuclear explosives. Israel, South Africa and perhaps other nations would be put forth by their enemies as nations which many believe have a nuclear capability.

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(4) A nuclear powers negotiation could encourage nuclear proliferation as other nations such as Pakistan perceive further incentive to develop nuclear weapons in order to add the prestige that would come from participation in a formalized nuclear powers negotiation. India might decide to deploy nuclear forces in order to obtain the negotiating rights and influence of a nuclear power. In any case, many potential proliferators are likely to charge that the five power conference is a conspiracy of the nuclear powers against the nuclear have-nots and may even point to any lack of progress in such a conference as evidence of a failure of the nuclear powers to make progress toward disarmament as called for in the NPT. Such failure, which is quite likely, could become the vehicle by which some proliferators justify detonation of nuclear weapons.

(5) Although Britain and France have indicated that they would reconsider their own nuclear force levels in the context of any superpower reductions and might even consider some future negotiations after START is completed and significant reductions attained, they, along with China, oppose a five-power conference. The Soviet Union itself would find many opportunities in a five-power conference but might also oppose the idea because the other four nuclear powers are anti-Soviet.

(6) Promises of total disarmament near at hand would unleash a flood of other grand arms control proposals which could be immediately harmful such as a comprehensive test ban, a ban on ballistic or cruise missile tests, or even the nuclear freeze.

(7) Important U.S. initiatives such as defense against ballistic missiles could be threatened in such talks if our allies, who are not keen on such developments, should join with our enemies who seek to delay our efforts.

Still arguments for a five-power conference remain:

(1) Major reductions in superpowers arms beyond START levels, especially on the Soviet side, are not likely as long as third countries such as Britain, France and China would increase in influence. U.S./ Soviet parity would likely be supported by the other nuclear powers which are all anti-Soviet.

(2) A five-power conference would capture the high ground in the nuclear public diplomacy debate and could reduce the domestic pressures on any one of the nuclear powers among the democracies to make unwarranted concessions.

(3) Long-term planning for preventing nuclear war in the next century has already begun as illustrated by the President's Strategic Defense initiative. No one has ever successfully charted an actual transition to total nuclear disarmament, much less gotten international agreement on anything more than a pledge for disarmament at some time very far away.

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(4) A five-nation conference might accomplish some limited objectives. For example, it could be modified to limit its scope and mandate to focus on useful steps such as confidence building measures which could be adopted under a concensus rule. Total privacy in such talks could permit the nuclear powers to deal with sensitive issues such as nuclear non-proliferation in a way which does not attract attention and produce adverse results. Difficult issues such as ASAT could be discussed in privacy in such talks and avoid exploitation in propaganda battles. In short, five-power talks could serve both as confidence building talks and as an escape fora for issues too difficult or sensitive to be discussed openly.

Still, given that the road from deterrence to disarmament is long, difficult and uncertain, the United States, in its insistence on deep reductions in a stabilizing manner, has shown its commitment to at least begin to march down that path as required in a number of international treaties and in its own domestic law. One must then ask, are there not steps which can be taken now, other than or in addition to a five power conference which could permit us to go safely even further down the path of reductions? In that context, a closer look at the relationship of the Presidents strategic defense initiative with arms control deserves special attention, with or without a nuclear powers disarmament conference. Both strategic defense and arms control are highly controversial area filled with risks for the United States, and each has been approached thus far by the United States in a cautious, evolutionary way. Nevertheless, in a future age of uncertain deterrence, both will be vital issues which are inherently linked. Whether we like it or not, specific proposals to link them, either in helpful or harmful ways, are inevitable.

In his speech on March 23, 1983, President Reagan called for a program to investigate strategic defense technologies which might permit us to deter nuclear attack by means other than an almost total reliance on strategic offensive retaliation. A Senior Interagency Report consisting of both technical and policy analysis confirms that this may be possible. Not only is strategic defense itself enhanced in effectiveness by nuclear arms reductions, but nations with strategic defenses are less sensitive to the balance instabilities associated with reduced force levels such as cheating, breakout, technological breakthroughs, third country alliances, and the failure of any one or two legs of their Triads. Because no strategic defense system is likely to be totally leak-proof, prevention of any nuclear retaliation at all is not possible. However, strategic defense does tend to negate complex nuclear /warwinning scenarios which make direct nuclear attack more likely and also which drive the very large levels of offensive nuclear arms which one sees in the world today.

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Thus far, examination of the arms control implications of the President's strategic defense initiative has focused almost entirely on whether or not the R&D program is compatible with the ABM Treaty. Some debate has taken place over whether or not defense against ballistic missiles would encourage a major build-up in ballistic missiles or encourage negotiated reductions in ballistic missiles as their utility declines. Some believe that a highly effective defense would encourage de-MIRVing of ballistic missiles. Others believe that an arms race for countermeasures is now about to accelerate. The United States has indicated that it is prepared to discuss the Strategic Defense Initiative in an appropriate forum, but the Soviet Union has instead sought an international conference of scientists to be used as a propaganda forum against the US initiative.

No one has yet put forth positive arms control proposals linked to strategic defense, largely because the ABM Treaty now bans all but the most limited kinds of ballistic missile defense. Still, there is recognition that strategic defense could profit from certain arms control constraints and seeks objectives which could also be addressed by arms control and reductions. For example, one could consider attempting to achieve the goals of strategic defense at lower cost and effort by proposing a ban on ballistic missiles after the year 2005 or so. The danger, of course, with any such "dual track" approach is that a western defense initiative will be held hostage to arms control while the Soviet Union continues its efforts. For example, critics will call for a slow-down R&D until such time as we have failed to achieve an agreement which would ban ballistic missiles, etc. Nevertheless, development of positive arms control initiatives to accompany the President's strategic defense initiative might actually prove helpful. Work on the role of arms control in providing for a stable transition from deterrence based on offensive systems to deterrence based on defensive systems as not been done. Nevertheless, everyone recognizes that this is a problem which must be addressed.

Clearly, it could prove useful to examine whether or not the President's strategic defense initiative can be cast, in Public Diplomacy, as a step which would permit even greater reductions in nuclear arms. Such a step could be followed by studies on whether or not advancement of strategic defense technologies could be accompanied by specific arms control proposals. At some point, the U.S. could propose to the Soviet Union, and perhaps other countries, talks aimed at long-term planning and projections, as opposed to near-term binding agreements, which deal with preventing war in the years ahead. Such talks might lead to negotiations at some point on the transition from offense-based deterrence to defense-based deterrence.

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In summary, we must maintain a strong deterrent in the face of increasing challenges and changing circumstances. The President's strategic defense initiative is a vital part of this process and will be linked to arms control in ways that are both helpful and harmful. Capturing the high ground on the future of deterrence and arms control could be extremely helpful, but we must be mindful of the dangerous "slippery slopes" which could result in the strategic defense initiative, like ASAT and CW, being linked to arms control demands which slow down those programs without any nearterm prospect for agreements which address our concerns.

There are severe dangers for the NATO alliance associated with a five-power nuclear conference. Nevertheless, if a five-power nuclear conference were held, initially it should be for discussion, not negotiations, and it should not focus initially on strategic defense. A better mandate might be for the nuclear powers to discuss long range planning for preventing nuclear war in the years ahead. Although four of the five powers are hostile to the Soviet Union, a concensus approach would limit dangers associated with such talks. Likewise, although the existence of the talks should be made public, the actual conduct of the discussions should be very private so as to avoid the development of public pressures on the democracies to make concessions. No steps should be taken on a five-power conference without careful study followed by even more careful alliance consultation.

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