

Instructions to the US delegation for the negotiations on disarmament (Geneva, 8 March 1985)

Caption: On 8 March 1985, US President Ronald Reagan gives instructions to the US delegation for the first round of negotiations with the Soviet Union on arms control, due to open in Geneva on 12 March. The US–Soviet negotiations will focus on three issues: strategic nuclear weapons, intermediate-range nuclear weapons, and defence and space systems.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 165INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FIRST ROUND OF US/SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS
IN GENEVA (U)

Our nation faces a number of challenges to its national security. Each of these imposes demands and presents opportunities. To achieve our national goals, we will have to apply all the instruments at our disposal in a coherent and complementary way. (U)

The Soviet Union remains the principal menace to our security and that of our allies. As a part of a larger effort to improve its overall military capability, the Soviet Union's improvement of its ballistic missile force, providing increased prompt, hard target kill capability, has increasingly threatened the fundamental survivability of our land-based retaliatory forces and the leadership structure that commands them. At the same time, the Soviet Union has continued to pursue strategic advantage through the development of active defenses with increased capability to counter surviving U.S. retaliatory forces. It is spending significant resources on passive defensive measures aimed at improving the survivability of its own forces, military command structure, and national leadership -- ranging from providing mobility for its latest generation of ICBMs, to constructing a network of super-hard bunkers to protect its leadership -- thus further eroding the effectiveness of our existing offensive deterrent. Finally, the problem of Soviet non-compliance with arms control agreements, including the ABM Treaty, is a cause of increasing concern. (S)u

In response to this long-term pattern of Soviet activity, the United States is compelled to take certain immediate actions designed both to maintain security and stability in the near-term and to ensure security and stability in the future. We must act in three areas. (S)u

First, we must modernize our offensive nuclear retaliatory forces. This is necessary to reestablish and maintain the balance in the near-term, and to create the strategic conditions that will permit us to pursue effectively the other options I will mention. The Administration's comprehensive strategic modernization program permits us to implement this option. (S)u

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by J. Saunders, National Security Council

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However, over the long run, this path alone cannot fully assure U.S. national security interests. As noted in NSDD 153, the trends set in motion by the pattern of Soviet activity, and the Soviets' persistence in that pattern of activity, indicate that continued long-term U.S. dependence on offensive forces alone for deterrence is likely to lead to a steady erosion of stability to the strategic disadvantage of the United States and its allies. In fact, should these trends be permitted to continue and the Soviet investment in both offensive and defensive capability proceed unrestrained and unanswered, the resultant condition will destroy the foundation on which deterrence has rested for a generation. (C)

Secondly, we must take those steps necessary to provide a future option for changing the basis upon which deterrence and stability rest and to do so in a way that allows us both to negate the destabilizing growth of Soviet offensive forces and to channel Soviet defensive activity toward mutually beneficial ends. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) is specifically aimed towards this goal. (U)

In the near term, the SDI program directly responds to the ongoing and extensive Soviet anti-ballistic missile effort, including the existing deployments permitted under the ABM Treaty. The SDI research program provides a necessary and powerful deterrent to any Soviet near-term decision to expand rapidly its anti-ballistic missile capability beyond that contemplated by the ABM Treaty. This, in itself, is a critical task. However, the overriding, long-term importance of SDI to the United States is that it offers the possibility of radically altering the dangerous military trends cited above by moving to a better, more stable basis for deterrence, and by providing new and compelling incentives to the Soviet Union for seriously negotiating reductions in existing nuclear arsenals. (U)

The Soviet Union is correct in recognizing the potential of advanced defense concepts -- especially those involving boost, post-boost, and mid-course defenses -- to change existing, and increasingly destabilizing, aspects of the strategic situation. In investigating the potential of these systems, we do not seek to establish a unilateral advantage. However, if the promise of SDI is fulfilled, the destabilizing Soviet advantage accumulated over the past ten years at great cost can be redressed. And, in the process, we will have enhanced deterrence significantly by turning to a greater reliance upon defensive systems -- systems which threaten no one. (C)

Third, we have to use negotiation and diplomacy to complement our force modernization and SDI programs and help us address the challenge we face both in the near term and as we seek to transition into a more stable and secure future. In this effort, we will continue our pursuit of equitable and verifiable agreements that lead to significant reductions in the size of

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existing nuclear arsenals and will also seek resolution of our serious compliance concerns. At the same time, the specific details of the agreements we seek must provide for our security and that of our allies and must enhance stability. (C)

The U.S. Approach to Negotiations. As previously indicated in NSDD 153, the thrust of the U.S. effort for the foreseeable future will be as follows. (U)

1. We will continue to pursue vigorously the negotiation of equitable and verifiable agreements leading to significant reductions of existing nuclear arsenals. As we do, we will continue to exercise flexibility concerning the mechanisms used to achieve these reductions, but judging these mechanisms on their ability to maintain the security of the United States and our allies, to enhance stability, and to reduce the risk of war. (S)

2. As we do so, we will protect the promise offered by the US ASAT and SDI research program to alter the adverse, long-term prospects we now face and to provide a basis for a more stable deterrent at some future time. This specifically involves protecting those SDI technologies that may permit a layered defense, including boost, post-boost, and mid-course elements. (S)

3. To prepare for the day that promise may be realized, we will immediately begin the process of bilateral discussion needed to lay the foundation for the cooperative integration of advanced defenses into the forces of both sides at such time as the state of the art and other considerations make it sensible to do so. (S)

4. Complementing this, we will also protect the U.S. strategic modernization program which is needed to maintain existing deterrence, to restore the balance of offensive forces, and to provide incentives for negotiating real reductions in the size of existing nuclear arsenals. (S)

In addition, as noted above, we will continue to raise our compliance concerns with the Soviet Union, seeking their resolution as fundamental to the prospect of genuine arms control. (U)

Characterizing the U.S. Approach. The guidance provided in NSDD 153 with respect to characterizing the US approach to the Soviet Union, the Congress, our Allies, and Western publics is reaffirmed. The basic, central concept that the U.S. is pursuing should be characterized as follows. (C)

"During the next ten years, the U.S. objective is a radical reduction in the power of existing and planned offensive

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nuclear arms, as well as the stabilization of the relationship between offensive and defense nuclear arms, whether on earth or in space. We are even now looking forward to a period of transition to a more stable world, with greatly reduced levels of nuclear arms and an enhanced ability to deter war based upon the increasing contribution of non-nuclear defenses against offensive nuclear arms. This period of transition could lead to the eventual elimination of all nuclear arms, both offensive and defensive. A world free of nuclear arms is an ultimate objective to which we, the Soviet Union, and all other nations can agree." (U)

General Guidance to the U.S. Delegation. In implementing the above, the additional general guidance provided in the draft instructions cable developed by the Senior Arms Control Group (SACG) and the U.S. Delegation is approved. This cable should be redrafted to reference this directive as appropriate and be promptly resubmitted in final form for clearance prior to release. (U)

Instructions for the Defense and Space Negotiating Group. The additional guidance provided in the draft instructions cable for the INF Defense and Space Negotiating Group developed by the Senior Arms Control Group and the U.S. Delegation is also approved. This cable should also be redrafted to reference this directive as appropriate and be promptly resubmitted in final form for clearance prior to its release. (U)

Instructions for the INF Negotiating Group. The primary U.S. objective in this area is to press for early progress on INF consistent with the criteria for agreement previously enunciated. The U.S. INF negotiating group should make clear that the U.S. believes that an agreement is possible on the basis of the September 1983 U.S. proposals which signalled flexibility and a willingness to consider a variety of ways to reach the goal of equal global limits on LRINF. The negotiating group should point out that the U.S. proposals provide for an equal global limit under which the United States would consider not deploying its full global allotment in Europe. They also indicate that the United States also is willing to consider reductions in Pershing II missile deployments and limitations on aircraft, two major concerns of the Soviet Union. The negotiating group should stress that within our basic principles, the U.S. remains prepared and ready to show considerable flexibility. (C)

The U.S. INF negotiating group should probe the Soviets for any signs of corresponding flexibility on their part. While doing so, the INF negotiating group is authorized to explore Soviet interest in equal global entitlements at levels other than those previously proposed. Findings as a result of the above actions should be reported back to Washington, including recommendations for future U.S. actions. (C)

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The U.S. INF negotiating group will not introduce the concept of equal percentage reductions. Should the Soviets raise this approach, the U.S. side will reject it. In doing so, the U.S. side should point out that we could envision how such an approach, if applied under appropriate conditions, could yield a very limited set of outcomes that could be of interest to both sides. For example, the U.S. can imagine an approach through which equal warhead levels could be reached through a specific equal percentage reduction of launchers on both sides (i.e., the U.S. reducing from its planned levels of deployment -- 224 GLCM and Pershing II launchers carrying 572 missiles/warheads). An approach leading to such an outcome, under the proper conditions, could perhaps be crafted in such a way to be of mutual interest. However, this is the exception rather than the general rule. Therefore, the U.S. feels that the range of acceptable outcomes likely to result by the application of this concept is so narrow, compared to the range of unacceptable outcomes, that it invalidates the equal percentage reductions concept as an acceptable operative principle to serve as the basis for a mutually acceptable agreement. (S)

In addition to the above, the additional guidance provided in the draft instructions cable for the INF Negotiating Group developed by the Senior Arms Control Group and the U.S. Delegation is approved. This cable should also be redrafted to incorporate the guidance provided by this directive and reference it as appropriate. The redrafted cable should be promptly resubmitted in final form for clearance prior to its release. (U)

Instructions for the START Negotiating Group. In the area of strategic forces, the primary focus must remain on achieving significant reductions in the most destabilizing forces, ballistic missiles, and especially MIRVed, land-based ICBMs. In doing so, the U.S. will continue to place its emphasis on reducing the numbers of warheads and the level of destructive capacity and potential associated with these systems. (C)

The U.S. certainly recognizes the Soviet interest in dealing with Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles (SNDVs). The U.S. is prepared to entertain Soviet alternatives to our own position in this area. However, we remain convinced that appropriate reductions in the number of ballistic missile warheads and destructive capacity and potential are the central issues that we must mutually address. (C)

The outcome that the U.S. continues to seek remains a reduction for the period of this agreement to an equal limit of 5,000 ballistic missile warheads which applies to the forces of both sides. During the past year, we have studied a number of ways to reach this point. Some involve relatively fast reductions. Others would move more slowly to accommodate normal force planning and an improved confidence in the reduction activity over time. The mechanism finally chosen to accomplish

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the reduction must provide for the national security of the U.S. and its allies. It must also enhance stability. But, given these conditions, it is the outcome that is of primary importance. (S)

With respect to ballistic missile destructive capability, the U.S. remains flexible on how reductions in ballistic missile destructive capability are achieved (i.e., through direct or indirect limitations) as long as an appropriate outcome results. However, of equal importance to reductions in the number of ballistic missile warheads and ballistic missile destructive capability, is the quality of stability that results from the specific reductions. In that context, the U.S. continues to believe that moving away from high concentrations of land-based MIRVed ballistic missiles is in everyone's interest. (C)

The U.S. is prepared to explore trade-offs between areas of relative U.S. advantage and areas of relative Soviet advantage. The U.S. feels that the relative U.S. advantage in bomber forces and the relative Soviet advantage in land-based ballistic missile forces offers the grounds for such a potential trade-off. (C)

The above builds upon U.S. proposals previously made and constitutes the foundation of the U.S. position. The START negotiating group should draw upon the above as appropriate in presenting the U.S. position to the Soviet side. (C)

The START negotiating group should probe in the areas of potential trade-offs, the pace of reductions, and methods of addressing ballistic missile destructive potential. It should listen to Soviet views on alternative SNDV limits. Findings should be reported to Washington, including recommendations for future U.S. actions. (C)

The START negotiator is also authorized the following contingent authority. As a function of the degree of Soviet interest in making early progress as reflected by specific Soviet proposals, or as a result of significant exploratory conversation, you are authorized to state that: (U)

- The U.S. is willing to consider Soviet proposals which involve associated limitations on ballistic missile warheads and Air Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCMs), so long as the resulting outcome would result in significant reductions in ballistic missile warheads, improved overall stability, and equality in the aggregate. Any specific aggregate numbers proposed by the Soviet Union should be referred to Washington. However, in accordance with the criteria stated, any levels proposed that would not result in a reduction in the number of Soviet ballistic missile warheads should be rejected at the time proposed. (S)

- In the context of an agreement in which U.S. concerns about the destructive capacity and potential of ballistic missiles were met, the U.S. is willing to consider Soviet

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proposals which could involve associated limits on ballistic missiles and bombers with the total of both in the range previously proposed by the Soviet Union (i.e., around 1800). (S)

The previously submitted draft cable of instructions submitted in this area should be promptly redrafted to reflect the guidance provided above. This revised cable should be submitted as a draft in final message form for final clearance prior to its release. (C)

Ronald Reagan

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