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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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Authority: EO 13526  
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
Date: APR 02 2018

26 January 1981  
I-20292/81

POLICY

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Meeting on US/Soviet Relations (U) -- INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

(S) The meeting on Monday, 26 January, is billed as a "Review of US/Soviet Relations." This paper does not purport to cover the whole scope of that topic, but focusses rather on how the state of those relations impacts DoD's direct concerns.

(S) The present state of US-Soviet relations are openly and notoriously cool. Our efforts at making detente work have been met over the years by a relentless Soviet military build-up which has underwritten such actions as the use of Soviet military equipment and third country surrogates in the Third World, the invasion of Afghanistan and the threatened use of force against Poland. In addition, the Soviets took an altogether unhelpful, unprincipled and opportunistic position vis-a-vis the American hostages in Iran.

(S) The Soviets seem fundamentally driven by a determination to assert themselves as a world power. There is no question either that they are profoundly concerned about the Chinese, and deeply troubled by the growing rapprochement between China and the West, particularly the United States. This historic fear of the Chinese is compounded by the Soviet view that the West is attempting to encircle Russia with hostile nations.

(S) While Soviet foreign policy can be explained in terms of classic Russian foreign policy, it has an ideological overlay that permits it to exploit discontent, particularly in the undeveloped areas of the world, and it has an appeal in the developed areas of the world among those who take the view that the world's troubles are attributable to the ills of capitalism. In addition, it is reasonable to speculate that the Soviets' emphasis on the development of military might and the expansion of influence in the Third World is seen by some as symptomatic of a society which finds it unable to deal adequately with the economic and social problems it has at home. There is another and equally plausible view that the Soviets would be behaving as they are even if they had a handle on their domestic problems. *Given their ideology, which holds they will prevail over capitalism, this latter view has considerable merit.*

(S) Of course, the Soviets self-righteously disclaim any responsibility for the current state of relations. They claim that it is the US, fearful of competing with the USSR as an equal and desirous of enforcing its will around the world, which is the expansionist power. For example, they regard the concerns which we expressed as a consequence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a pretext in support of our policy of encirclement of the Soviet Union.

(S) Aside from providing the driving force for the development of military measures on our side, Soviet behavior has had notable impact on our efforts to arrive at satisfactory arms control arrangements. It is not imprudent to assume that the Soviets view arms control not as an inherently good and peaceable activity, to be

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Classified by DASD/ISA/E&NA  
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APR 02 2018

regarded in isolation from the balance of the security equation, but rather as a calculating means to reach acceptable understandings which manage the nuclear problem and permit a reallocation of resources away from the activities controlled by agreement (i.e., the expense of strategic forces to the solution of other military and non-military problems). For reasons of both international and domestic political concerns, recent Soviet behavior has brought our major arms control efforts to a virtual standstill. The only significant arms control discussions which are still open have to do with negotiations of several years' standing having to do with potential reductions in conventional force levels in Europe (the MBFR talks) and negotiations begun last year concerning Long Range Theater Nuclear Forces (LRTNF) in Europe. Those discussions have been most general and tentative, and our principal interest in seeing them continue at the moment is because should they be broken off we might find the Europeans most reluctant to proceed with the currently planned deployment of Long Range Theater Nuclear Forces. The current stalemate on SALT negotiations could similarly play in the European decision to go forward with LRTNF deployments, although that link is not so clear.

A "good" agreement would be valuable, but its contours are not yet apparent.

Our trade relations with the Soviets have likewise been affected by our judgment that they should be restrained both to punish the Soviets as a consequence of what they did in Afghanistan and also, Afghanistan notwithstanding, because we do not believe it wise to engage in trade which directly or materially improves the Soviet military posture. In this regard also, the attitudes and behavior of our Allies influences our options.

Quite generally, the US is inclined for both political and practical reasons to be more restrictive in trade with the Soviets than are our major Allies. There is a difference of view as to how much one can expect economic interdependence to influence behavior. The Europeans seem often to forget that economic interdependence can and most often does inhibit the behavior of both partners, not just the other fellow. The value of Soviet trade to our economy is trivial while to some of the Europeans it is more significant. Here again, significance of trade with the Soviets to the European economies is in our view sometimes overblown by them as an excuse for not taking difficult political steps, a reflection on the preceding observation regarding interdependence. (In quantity, then, the value of Soviet trade to the Europeans is quite low.)

Specifically, the Commission has asked for a general proposal to review large projects and has asked for more examples from us.

In this regard, the United States is somewhat in default of an obligation undertaken after the invasion of Afghanistan to propose to our Allies guidelines by which we would monitor more restrictive trade practices with the Soviets in order to reduce further the potential that Western trade will enhance Soviet military development. Generally, those proposals would choke-back further than is the case now on the transfer of computer technology, and would institute other steps to restrict trade which would contribute substantially to defense production. We will shortly be sending you a memorandum addressing this problem.


There have been sporadic military-to-military contacts with the Soviets over the years, and they have shown as much and sometimes more interest in those than we have. However, with the exception of the institutionalized incident at Sea talks, which are held bi-annually between our navies, formal DoD contacts with the Soviets are virtually non-existent, primarily due to the US policy of not conducting "business as usual" following Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan. The last high level military contact took place during the 1979 Vienna summit when Secretary Brown and General Jones met with Minister of Defense Ustinov and Marshal Ogarkov.

\* The Soviets have not reallocated much away from the strategic nuclear area since SALT 2. Their build-up has been impressive and sustained. Fortunately, they started so far behind, and...

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(S) There are no initiatives or proposals to increase military contacts, There are several lying fallow. In 1978 the Soviets proposed an exchange of senior military officers, at about the three-star level. This proposal is still on the table. We planned to invite Marshal Ogarkov to visit the US in 1977, but the invitation failed to materialize when Ambassador Toon was unable to deliver it to Minister of Defense Ustinov. We have also proposed war college visits (one took place in 1977, but the Soviets rejected our proposal for one in 1978), and an exchange of military lecturers (we sent one there in 1977). In our judgment any revival of those notions depends on a considerable improvement in relations.



Franklin D. Kramer  
Under Secretary of Defense  
for Policy (Acting)

*On Saturday, we sent down the panel's recommendations. In general, they are quite sensible, although several merit close scrutiny.*

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Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
Date: 2 APR 2018 Authority: EO 13526 r5 USC 552  
Declassify:  Deny in Full: \_\_\_\_\_  
Declassify in Part: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason: \_\_\_\_\_  
MDR: 18 -M- 01061

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