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Date: AUG 19 2019

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

#31 ✓

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August 14, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Limitations on Nuclear Testing (U)

It has been two weeks since we received the most recent correspondence from General Secretary Gorbachev outlining the latest Soviet nuclear testing moratorium proposal. Even though we have yet to receive a formal response to our most recent offer to have Soviet experts directly measure the yield of a U. S. nuclear test at the Nevada test site, I would like to be in a position to reply to the most recent letter from General Secretary Gorbachev on this subject in the very near future. (U)

In considering any response, we must certainly recognize that the security of the United States and our Allies depends upon a credible nuclear deterrent. That deterrent, in turn, depends to a large degree upon an appropriate level of nuclear testing needed to maintain our confidence in the reliability of our existing nuclear weapons stockpile, to develop weapons to support needed modernization, and to sustain a robust technology base against all future contingencies. The Soviets also face similar requirements. (U)

We must also recognize that any limitations on nuclear testing must not only permit U. S. and Allied security requirements to be met, but must also impose equal and verifiable limits on both the United States and the Soviet Union. This is one of the reasons that we have not been able to pursue ratification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET). (U)

The record of the Soviet Union argues strongly that the ball on the nuclear testing issue remains firmly in the Soviet court. Nevertheless, I want to be absolutely sure that we have explored every possibility. Therefore, recognizing our requirements for national defense, for significant progress in U. S. monitoring confidence, and for resolving Soviet non-compliance, and drawing upon the sizeable body of work that has been done on nuclear testing limitations over the last four years, I would like your views on the following issues. (U)

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1. Do current U. S. modernization plans permit compliance with the TTBT and PNET? For example, can we develop the TRIDENT D-5, MIDGETMAN and other needed nuclear weapons under the restrictions imposed by these agreements? ~~(S)~~
2. Can we assure the reliability and safety of the existing U. S. nuclear weapons stockpile within the TTBT and PNET agreements? ~~(S)~~
3. Are there potential options, within the context of appropriate and proportionate responses to Soviet non-compliance, which could not be undertaken under the TTBT and PNET agreements? ~~(S)~~
4. Are there planned or potential aspects of research under the Strategic Defense Initiative which could not be conducted under the TTBT and PNET agreements? ~~(S)~~
5. In the context of the above considerations, could the TTBT/PNET threshold levels be lowered? ~~(S)~~
6. Apart from the issue of the level of yield, are there other actions which the U. S. could propose to improve the nuclear testing limitations regime? For example, we have long had in mind certain monitoring improvements. Are there other procedures and safeguards which should be considered? ~~(S)~~

Both the questions that I have posed for your consideration and your responses on these issues to me should be treated as matters of utmost sensitivity. Therefore, I would like access to this memorandum and your response restricted only to those who absolutely must contribute to this effort. Please provide only to those who absolutely must contribute to this effort. Please provide your views directly to me through my Assistant for National Security Affairs by August 23, 1985 ~~(S)~~

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Ronald Reagan

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