

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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XVII.9c

NUCLEAR COMMAND & CONTROL

President's Nuclear Initiative -

TASK 4

(Third Draft - 8 Nov)

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Purpose:

(S) In support of the President's Nuclear Initiative, this paper outlines the possible scope, objectives, and modalities of potential discussions with representatives of the current central Soviet government and appropriate republic officials on nuclear command and control (NC²) arrangements, and possible improvements. Thus, the formulation of discussion topics and objectives should anticipate discussions with key members of the Soviet military that minister to their command and control system, Ministry of Defense (MoD) personnel knowledgeable in the NC², and senior officials from the executive branch of the central government and republics who have insight into and influence over the NC². Senior officials from the republics cannot be isolated from these discussions, but at the same time, it must be recognized that they have more to learn than they have to contribute to these discussions. We must take the opportunity and show them how to deal with the control of these weapons in a manner that is best for international stability and in the interests of US national security.

Background:

(U) In his 27 September Nuclear Initiative, the President proposed beginning discussions with the Soviet Union to explore cooperation in three areas pertaining to nuclear weapon safety, security, and command and control. Regarding the latter, the President stated that "We should discuss nuclear command and control arrangements, and how these might be improved to provide more protection against the unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons."

(S) In his 5 October response, Gorbachev expressed his nation's readiness to enter into a substantive dialogue with the United States on the development of safe and ecologically sound technologies for the storing and transporting nuclear warheads, methods of recycling nuclear weapon devices, and enhancing nuclear security. While this statement seemed to exclude command and control, the US delegation, led by Ambassador Bartholomew, was subsequently assured that the Soviet government was prepared to engage with the United States across all issues raised by President Bush.

(S) Gorbachev's proposals are made against a backdrop of continuing change as the former Union's republics strive for a more democratic form of government, political independence, and economic stability. At a minimum, some of the republics also seek a voice in the decision to use Soviet nuclear weapons particularly those stationed on their soil. These dramatic changes have raised a number of questions relating to the control of these weapons and the degree of success the republics may have in achieving their political and economic aims as the Soviet NC² system adjusts to these changes. The following are questions raised during and after the failed August coup that will remain important as the NC² system evolves:

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- Who has political authority over the use of nuclear weapons and can that authority be circumvented?
- Who has technical authority over the use of nuclear weapons and does it correspond to our understanding of political authority?
- What is the role of a republic in a decision on nuclear release, that is to say, is it a shared responsibility with a central government oversight function?
- What circumstances could disrupt political or technical authority in a manner that would increase the risk of unauthorized use?

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Definitions:

(e) Nuclear command and control (NC²) encompasses a wide range of disciplines. For the purposes of this paper, only a portion of NC² will be included. Issues such a security (physical and personnel), and environmental, safety and health problems will be addressed by the other papers tasked under the NSC's Nuclear Initiatives Work Plan. Specifically, this paper will deal with the lawful exercise of authority and direction over the use of nuclear weapons and the means to assure, and to assure against an unlawful intervention into that process. This paper will not address such issues as use control devices, personnel reliability, or safety programs, although the paper does address their over-arching policies, criteria, and standards that provide the overall framework for NC². Likewise, this paper will not deal with specific control situations such as transportation, storage and dismantlement of warheads; and because the potential for accidental use stems mainly from scenarios involving warning, measures dealing with authorized use of nuclear weapons based on erroneous attack warning data (e.g., a false alarm) will be dealt with in another paper.

Assumptions & Objectives:

(S) Our ability to influence changes in the Soviet nuclear command and control system -- about which our knowledge is incomplete -- is probably as limited as our ability to influence the transformation of the Soviet Union itself. Command and control is an extremely sensitive subject for both the US and the Soviets. The Soviets have offered few details on how it works; the US may have reservations about discussing certain details of NC² because of concerns over revealing potential vulnerabilities. Clearly, we should take steps to protect sensitive aspects of US command and control, the disclosure of which could injure our national security. We may also need to protect aspects of the Soviet NC² from disclosure to third parties. At the same time, we should ensure that the republics know how "their" system works.

(S) Without question, NC² enjoys a high priority on both sides. The Soviet have voiced and demonstrated their interest in assuring very tight control. Indeed, Soviet controls are possibly tighter than US controls, making it difficult for anyone, including the United States, to "lecture" the Soviets on how to create a better system. We must ensure that their technical capability to assure authorized use and to assure against unauthorized use is maintained as the

central Soviet government evolves and shares power and the control of nuclear weapons in a peaceful fashion with the republics.

~~(S)~~ That said, the US may have some leverage, however, particularly in dealings with republic leaders, to help ensure that changes in Soviet NC² do not increase the risk of unauthorized use. The overall objective should be to support any initiative that would enhance US security. To that end, the following are specific US objectives for our discussions on command and control with appropriate Soviet and republic officials:

- ~~(S)~~ Encourage the peaceful development and maintenance of a reliable, responsible system of collective control with appropriate checks and balances.
 - ~~(S)~~ Seek to preserve the technical system of controls that is centrally managed, but moved under the collective, inter-republic authority.
 - ~~(S)~~ Collective control responsibilities over nuclear weapons should extend to their development, production, deployment, tactical use, and retirement.
- ~~(S)~~ Encourage greater civilian control, providing for independent analysis and review of military matters in general, and NC² issues in particular. (While the Soviet military and the current Soviet central government may not understand the US system of independent civilian review of military matters, we must show the republic leaders the virtues of an effective system of civilian and military checks and balances.)
- (U) Explore possible cooperative means of improving command and control arrangements to provide more protection against the unauthorized use of nuclear weapons.
- (U) If discovered, identify areas in which we might offer improvements to the Soviets on their system, and adapt helpful Soviet innovations to the US system.
- (U) Gain further insight (information gathering) into current Soviet command and control arrangements and how they might evolve with the ongoing transformation of the Soviet political and military structure.
- (U) Foster Soviet confidence in the US of NC² with the hope of gaining similar feelings on the Soviet's ability to control their nuclear forces, thus increasing stability in a crisis.

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Areas for Possible Discussions:

(U) To preserve the exploratory nature of the initial discussions, to avoid creating expectations of major breakthroughs, and to protect against any efforts to exploit these discussions, but at the same time, to take advantage of the window of opportunity to enhance US national security, the discussions should begin soon, but proceed cautiously on the prioritized list

of topics below. Based on the success of the first two "ice breaker" steps, discussions could proceed further. Because of the potential for the window to close, we should not attempt to pursue an area of discussion that the Soviets are reluctant to talk about. The following are potential areas for discussions:

(S) Lexicon on Command & Control Terminology: Both sides could exchange such a list of definitions to aid in understanding each sides' command and control process. The second objective would be to establish a basis for translations.

(S) Overview of US and Soviet Command Structures: Both sides could describe in general terms the authorities and procedures for making and implementing decisions on nuclear release, including -- in very general terms -- provisions to ensure continuity of constitutional government. Perhaps these discussions could begin with reciprocal visits to each side's national command centers (e.g., the US National Military Command Center) to establish a solid information base for further discussions. (The US could begin using Col Pavlov's visit to the US as a basis. Col Pavlov briefed members of Congress, *inter alia*, on Soviet NC² recently.)

(S) Command & Control Oversight: The US could describe the role and mission of entities such as the NC² Support Staff and Fail-safe and Risk Reduction Advisory Group. This could be used to encourage oversight of Soviet NC² from outside the General Staff and to learn of any past Soviet NC² reviews.

(S) Command & Control Assessments: The US could describe the means by which our NC² system is exercised, inspected, and assessed

(S) Use Control Policies & Standards: The sides could conduct a restricted discussion on standards, policies, design philosophy, selection process, and effectiveness assessment procedures, with the goal of increasing each side's confidence in the other's nuclear command and control system.

(S) Coalition Command and Control: The US could describe in general terms how it relates to its NATO partners in making decisions on nuclear policy, command and control, and deployments. This could allow us to probe on center and republic intentions concerning the control of Soviet weapons and perhaps to provide tacit encouragement to the republics to seek involvement in a collective nuclear decision making process. (The US will consult with the Allies before this occurs.)

(S) Senior US decision makers will need to determine how far we want to go in informing the republics on US control procedures.

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- ~~(S)~~ Risk Reduction Measures: We might explore possible indicators that would reveal whether or not the command and control link extending from the legal authority to the weapon is intact.
- ~~(S)~~ Improving Communications: We might also explore a means of improving communications or notification procedures between the two defense establishments, or the US defense establishment and authorities from the independent republics.
- ~~(S)~~ Failed Coup: Seek to determine if the Soviets made any changes to their system as a result to correct any deficiencies as a result of the coup.

~~(S)~~ The Soviets have indicated, in one forum or another, various subjects that they have an interest in discussing. Some of these concepts, such as joint launch control, are clearly not in the US interest.

Modalities:

~~(S)~~ Two possible venues for these discussions are: (i) a DoD-lead interagency working group; or (ii) an NSC-lead interagency working group.

~~(S)~~ Since one of our objectives is to encourage additional checks and balances, we will need to consider whether and how to involve republic authorities in these discussions. How and to what extent we educate republic leaders on nuclear command and control will depend on broader US objectives concerning the future of the Soviet Union and regarding whether we decide to provide tacit encouragement to the republics to seek greater involvement in nuclear decision making.

~~(S)~~ With respect to timing, discussions could begin once the areas for discussion are thoroughly vetted and "red-teamed" expeditiously to ensure they are suitable for discussion without harming US national security interests.

Implementation:

(TBD)

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Potential Attachments:

1. Background Paper on Soviet NC² (IC will furnish)
2. Characteristics of an Ideal NC² System (ISP will furnish)

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