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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

8 June 1983

Possible Soviet Moves in START
Over the Coming Months

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Summary

For Moscow, the lack of progress in Round III of the strategic arms reduction talks (START) probably was not surprising. The Soviets entered the session knowing that they had fundamental differences with the United States on the basic approach to strategic arms reductions but nevertheless continued their efforts to establish SALT II criteria as the framework for negotiations. They also continued to link the resolution of several specific issues in START to the evolution of the talks on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). They recognize that the course of the INF negotiations will influence not only START but also the overriding political environment for US-Soviet arms control.

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For the present, the Soviets appear to believe that they have a stake in the START process and have avoided any actions that would destroy this substantial and symbolically important bridge to the United States. They also appear to believe, however, that if they combine their present negotiating stance with vigorous public criticism of US proposals, the United States will modify its START position. Politburo, CPSU, and military officials will have several opportunities in the rest of 1983 to make major public pronouncements in this area.

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This paper was prepared by [redacted] of the Policy Analysis Division, Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, Policy Analysis Division, [redacted]

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Unless the United States substantially alters its negotiating posture, we believe the Soviets will be just as rigid in Round IV (June 1983) and Round V (October) of START as in previous sessions. They will reiterate the positions that have the effect of protecting their major strategic weapons programs. They have also stated that if the United States increases its "forward-based" INF systems in Europe, they will withdraw their offer to reduce intercontinental systems at START. [redacted]

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Late spring 1983 finds the Soviets in a position to undertake various activities related to their strategic forces--activities that would probably be designed to pressure the United States to alter its START negotiating position. None of them would substantially improve the capabilities of Soviet strategic forces, however; and this is likely to be a major factor in encouraging caution before departing from the framework of SALT II and their own draft START Treaty as the negotiations continue over the next six to nine months. [redacted]

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Background

During Round III of the START negotiations (2 February - 31 March 1983), Soviet negotiators continued their vigorous attack on the US proposal that START negotiations proceed in two phases, with ballistic missiles being reduced in the first phase and "slower flying systems" (bombers and cruise missiles) discussed in the second. They argued that all such weapons were equally dangerous and could be used as part of a first strike. Soviet negotiators also criticized those aspects of the US approach that, they argued, would require a rapid, expensive, large-scale, and unwarranted restructuring of their strategic forces. They specifically cited the US proposals for a ceiling of 400 heavy bombers, stating that they had no intention of either counting the Backfire as a heavy bomber or building bombers up to that sublimit. As for loading air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) on bombers, they argued that the US formula would legitimize huge deployments and would, therefore, not meet Soviet concerns, which included banning long-range cruise missiles (LRCMs). [REDACTED]

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Moscow's basic point of departure during this round remained the unratified SALT II agreement. In a draft treaty presented in March 1983, the Soviets proposed that both sides reduce their ICBM and SLBM launchers and heavy bombers in stages to a level of 1,800. (Such reductions, according to previous Soviet statements, would be completed by 1990.) Within this aggregate, they would establish sublimits on MIRV launchers and ICBM MIRV launchers and limits on the total number of nuclear warheads and bombs carried on all strategic nuclear delivery vehicles. [REDACTED]

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The draft treaty does not specifically mention launchers of the Soviets' SS-18 heavy ICBM. It bans the production of any new type of heavy ICBM and prohibits the conversion of launchers of light ICBMs (or of older types of ICBMs deployed prior to 1964) into launchers of heavy ICBMs and thus carries over the SALT limit of 308 heavy ICBM launchers into the START agreement. As part of their reductions scenario, the Soviets might of course choose to decrease the number of their SS-18s; but their discussions of this subject during the negotiations have been purposely vague and noncommittal and have avoided any explicit offers to reduce their heavy missile force. For Moscow, the fixed, heavy ICBM launchers remain a significant element of its strategic force posture, and it has spurned US proposals in this area as the equivalent of demands for unilateral concessions at the expense of one of its key systems. [REDACTED]

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Their draft treaty also codified the Soviets' previously expressed proposal for a total ban on LRCMs, although they probably realize that US agreement to such a ban is unlikely especially since the SALT II Treaty did not prohibit the deployment of long-range ALCMs, and the first US bomber squadron equipped with these systems became operational in mid-December 1982. The proposal probably reflects Moscow's awareness that US LRCMs, with their relatively small radar cross-section and their potential for deployment in large numbers, would pose an acute problem for Soviet defense planners. []

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The cruise missile provision in the Round III draft treaty is probably also intended to confirm the linkage between START and INF that the Soviets had previously set forth. During the START negotiations, their offer to reduce intercontinental systems to 1,800 has been explicitly made contingent on no increase in US "forward-based systems." Thus, the Soviet START position is inherently linked to the INF talks--specifically, to NATO's planned deployment of cruise missiles and Pershing II medium-range ballistic missiles in Western Europe. []

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Soviet Assessment of US Attitude

For the present, Moscow believes that it has a stake in the strategic arms negotiation process and has avoided any actions that would destroy this substantial and symbolically important bridge to the United States. The Soviets have, however, been publicly pessimistic for some time about the prospects for arms control agreements with the current US Administration, and recent statements by senior Soviet officials appear to reflect a deepening of Soviet suspicions and mistrust of Administration motives. While there is virtually no information on their private thinking, we have seen the following significant public statements:

- General Secretary Andropov, in an interview published in Pravda on 27 March 1983, accused the United States of treating issues in this area "flippantly."
- Deputy Prime Minister Gromyko, in a press conference held on 1 April, stated that the United States did not want an improvement in relations.
- Both Andropov and Gromyko have accused the Administration of making false or misleading statements about Soviet arms control and defense policies.

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- Both Andropov (on 27 March) and Defense Minister Ustinov (during a 7 April speech in East Germany) emphasized the necessity for the Soviet Union to remain vigilant in the face of external military threats.

While these themes have their antecedents in earlier propaganda, the current concentrated effort by senior Soviet government officials to heighten anti-US rhetoric on this subject appears to reflect a deliberate policy decision by the Andropov leadership to contrast their own "principled" approach with alleged irresponsible and erratic US behavior in this area.

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Recent unofficial comments by influential Soviets suggest that Moscow will not undertake any actions in the foreseeable future that could be interpreted as yielding to or strengthening the administration's arms control position. The underlying Soviet calculation appears to be that the combination of Moscow's present START negotiating stance with vigorous public criticism of US proposals will lead to a modification of the US START position. Despite increasing pessimism and suspicion of the Reagan Administration, Soviet officials may believe that favorable changes could occur in the months ahead, before this country becomes absorbed in its presidential election campaign. They apparently feel that there is still a substantial body of US opinion outside the Administration that would favor a strategic arms agreement along the lines of the SALT II Treaty. They may hope that these forces will grow in influence and ultimately induce changes in the Administration's approach to START.

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Congressional efforts to cut the US defense budget for fiscal year 1984 and significant legislative support for the nuclear freeze resolution may be interpreted by Moscow as reflecting political difficulties for the Administration that could prompt US compromises at START. The Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces (the Scowcroft Commission) may also encourage the Soviets to believe that US policy related to long-term development of strategic forces is undergoing reexamination within the Administration and that this reexamination might have a similar effect.

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Options for Public Diplomacy

During the rest of 1983, the Soviets will have several opportunities to continue their vigorous public criticism of the US arms control negotiating posture. They can create occasions for public diplomacy whenever they wish, of course, but we believe that the scheduled Supreme Soviet and Communist Party plenum sessions, armed forces anniversary days, the fall 1983

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session of the UN General Assembly, and the October Revolution celebration will offer propitious forums for pronouncements. Less compelling, but still plausible, opportunities for public pronouncements could arise during visits by foreign leaders to the USSR or state visits by Soviet leaders abroad. The Soviets will also exploit chance events as they occur. []

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We would expect Moscow to use all of these occasions to continue its public airing of specific objections to the US START negotiating position, press for consideration of its draft START treaty, and publicize similarities between its own position and the views of official or quasi-official US bodies (such as the Scowcroft Commission). We also believe that the Soviets will use one or more of these occasions to announce any possible withdrawal or revision of its START treaty prompted by the beginning of US INF deployments (December 1983), and we expect statements by senior military officials during this year to hint at any counterdeployments that the Soviets might have in mind. Table 1 sets forth a schedule of likely opportunities for such pronouncements. []

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Table 1Propitious Opportunities for Pronouncements on START

[START Session, Round IV, begins in June 1983]

June	Possible CPSU Central Committee Plenum (usually held one or two days before Supreme Soviet session, reportedly to focus on ideology)
June 16	USSR Supreme Soviet session
June	RSFSR Supreme Soviet session (held after USSR Supreme Soviet)
June	Visit to Soviet Union by Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany at end of month
July 25	Navy Day (speech by Sergey Georgiyevich Gorshkov, Naval Commander in Chief; possible address by Aleksey Alekseyevich Yepishev, Chief of Main Political Directorate, to Army and Navy Main Political Directorate)
August 15	Air Force Day (speech by Pavel Stephanovich Kutakhov, Air Forces Chief)
September 12	Tank Troops Day (speech by Yuriy Mikhaylovich Potapov, Chief of Main Armor Directorate)
September	Annual Session of UN General Assembly (speech by Deputy Prime Minister Andrey Gromyko)
	[START Session, Round V, begins in October]
October	Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA) summit in Moscow (now said to be scheduled for October; will focus on economic issues, but could provide forum, if one is needed, for bloc statements on START or INF)

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Mid-October	October Revolution anniversary slogans published (usually 14-17 October)
October or November	CPSU Central Committee Plenum on economy (fall plenum is always on economy)
October or November	USSR Supreme Soviet session on economy (date will be announced one month in advance; usually held in October or November, but sometimes as early as September or as late as December)
October or November	RSFSR Supreme Soviet session on economy (held after USSR Supreme Soviet; date announced one month in advance)
November 6	October Revolution anniversary meeting (speech by member of Politburo or Secretariat)
November 7	October Revolution anniversary parade (speech by Defense Minister Dmitriy Fedorovich Ustinov)
November 19	Rocket and Artillery Troops Day (speech by Vladimir Fedorovich Tolubko, Chief of Strategic Rocket Forces)

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Diplomatic Options in Geneva

Because the Soviet draft START treaty tabled in March codifies Moscow's commitment to the framework of the unratified SALT II Agreement as the basis for negotiations, the Soviets are not likely to demonstrate any greater movement in Round IV and Round V toward the US position than they have in previous sessions. They will instead reiterate the provisions that have the effect of protecting the weapons and programs that make the most important contribution to their major strategic requirements. [REDACTED]

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Within this framework, however, the Soviets have various tactical options for activity that could give the appearance of change. At Geneva they might:

- ° Permit deployment of ALCMs (by revising article XI.1 of their treaty) but continue to ban ground-launched and submerged-launched cruise missiles. This offer would have the effect of acknowledging the deployment of US ALCMs on B-52s--but it would probably be made contingent upon an agreement by the United States to drop its distinction between "phase one" and "phase two" reductions so that bomber loadings, as well as missile reentry vehicles (RVs), would be counted immediately in aggregates. Such a proposal would also be consistent with Soviet INF positions.
- ° Discuss reciprocal de-MIRVing as an option for reductions. In the context of further developing the reductions proposals outlined in articles III, IV, and V of their treaty, the Soviets may suggest this concept in order to present an alternative to the reductions scenario that the United States has proposed. They might prefer to spread the reduced number of warheads over a greater number of launchers than the United States would permit.
- ° Propose that the one new type of light ICBM permitted in their article VII should have a single RV. This would be another attempt by the Soviets to deal with US proposals for RV reductions. The Soviet article at this point does not specify whether this "new type" of missile will be MIRVed or not. In conversations with US counterparts in informal and unofficial forums outside of START, Soviet spokesmen have mentioned the possibility of developing a "new type" of ICBM with a single RV. They may believe the

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US side would welcome this proposal because it is consistent with the recommendation of the Scowcroft Commission that the United States develop a new single-warhead ICBM. The Soviets may also be attracted to the element of the Scowcroft Commission recommendation which suggests that the MX--and by implication the Soviets' SS-X-24 ICBM--might be considered as an "existing type" of ICBM that would not be affected by any restrictions on development and deployment in a prospective arms control treaty. []

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Impact of the Economic Factor

We do not expect economic factors to influence the direction of the START negotiations in the immediate future, but we know that the planning cycle for the 12th Five-Year Plan (covering the period from 1986 to 1990) is under way and that the Soviet military establishment's assessment of the external threat is an essential element in this cycle. This military assessment is being formally developed during 1983, and the Politburo will consider it in 1984 in allocating resources for the 1986-90 defense plan. []

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Although Andropov seemed to give greatest weight to the Soviet Union's economic problems in his keynote address to the CPSU Central Committee plenum on 22 November 1982, we still have too little evidence to determine how he will handle the allocation of resources to defense. Of primary importance to Andropov and his colleagues is the requirement to maintain Soviet military power during the decade. []

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Near-Term Options for Deployments and "Analogous Responses"

Between June and December 1983 the Soviets will probably heighten those propaganda efforts that emphasize the threat of military deployments to counter the impending US programs. Their options and activities will probably be designed with the intention of applying pressure on Washington, rather than increasing their own strategic forces and capabilities. We doubt that Moscow would undertake any near-term actions inconsistent with their interpretation of the SALT II Treaty and their own recently presented START treaty. As noted, we believe that the Soviets might revise selected portions of their draft. We also believe, however, that much of the Soviet publicity to be observed during this period will in fact be disingenuous attempts to describe as countermeasures (for international consumption) various well-established Soviet weapons programs. []

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Among the programs that have been under way for several years are the following:

- ° At least one ICBM that may be the counter to the MX. The Soviets have tested a new ICBM, the SS-X-24, and have notified the United States that it would constitute the one "new type" of ICBM permitted to Moscow by the SALT II Treaty. We expect flight-testing of this missile to continue through 1983 and into 1984.
- ° Another ICBM that could be deployed from a mobile launcher. The Soviets began to test this second ICBM, [] but stated that the activity was connected with the modernization of an existing ICBM (designated by the United States as the SS-13) and not a "new type" of ICBM as defined in the SALT II Treaty. Although this system has been tested only from a silo launcher to date, we believe that it could be tested from a mobile launcher at any time. Such testing would probably lend strength to earlier Soviet START statements that in their view, the development of mobile ICBMs would contribute to strategic stability. 25X1
- ° An air-launched long-range cruise missile. [] the Soviets have had a development program to equip heavy bombers with LRCMs; they probably would consider deployment of such a system as an "analogous response" to the recent US deployment of cruise missiles on a B-52 squadron. We have identified a heavy bomber platform--a variant of the Bear--as well as a cruise missile that we believe has been tested from it. The entire system could reach initial operational capability in late 1983 or early 1984. 25X1
- ° Deployment of a submerged-launched LRCM. The Soviets are developing the SS-NX-21, with a capability against land targets; it could be deployed some time in 1983. In 1982 they launched a reconfigured ballistic missile submarine (previously dismantled in accordance with SALT provisions), which was apparently designed as a test platform for long-range SLCMs. Testing from its launchers could begin before the end of the year. (S NF)

Other Options for Strategic Forces

The activities described above could be considered to be in keeping with both the unratified SALT II Treaty and the US START position. During 1983, however, the Soviets could undertake a

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number of other options that would put their strategic forces at variance with both. Although consistent with their own recently tabled draft START treaty, these options (like those mentioned above), would probably be aimed more at pressuring the United States than at substantially improving the capabilities of Soviet strategic forces:

- Deploy the SS-16 as a mobile ICBM. The draft Soviet treaty contains no explicit prohibition on either mobile ICBMs or the SS-16. Statements at recent START sessions suggested that the Soviets considered mobile ICBMs as a useful solution to the problem of weapon survivability. Their comments at the Standing Consultative Committee (SCC) indicate that research on mobile systems is under way at Plesetsk. Although the Soviets have stated at the SCC that they are refraining from development, testing and deployment of the SS-16, we believe that some may be available for deployment.
- Increase production of the Backfire bomber or undertake its aerial refueling for intercontinental missions, or both. The Soviets assert that the Backfire should not fall within the framework of a strategic arms agreement, and their treaty contains no restrictions on its production and deployment.
- Deploy new SSBNs without dismantling older launchers as compensation. The second Typhoon SSBN will begin sea trials some time in 1983. The Soviets might choose not to dismantle a Y-class unit as compensation, a move that would be easily reversible. The Soviet treaty mandates phased reductions for launchers, however; so if Moscow exceeded the Interim Agreement freeze limits, it could complicate the task of meeting the dismantling schedule mandated in its own proposed treaty.
- Initiate actions to increase the number of MIRV-accountable launchers beyond the MIRV ICBM launcher sublimit of 820 in the SALT II Treaty. They could signal this intent by reexcavating launch control silos for MIRV ICBM launchers that were backfilled in 1977 and 1978. Such activity, if meant to pressure the United States, would be easily reversible if the Soviets did not also start converting the missile silos in these groups. But such action, too, could complicate Moscow's ability to meet its own proposed dismantling schedule. Increasing these launchers (and thereby the number of RVs) would be another sign of Soviet displeasure with the US negotiating position.

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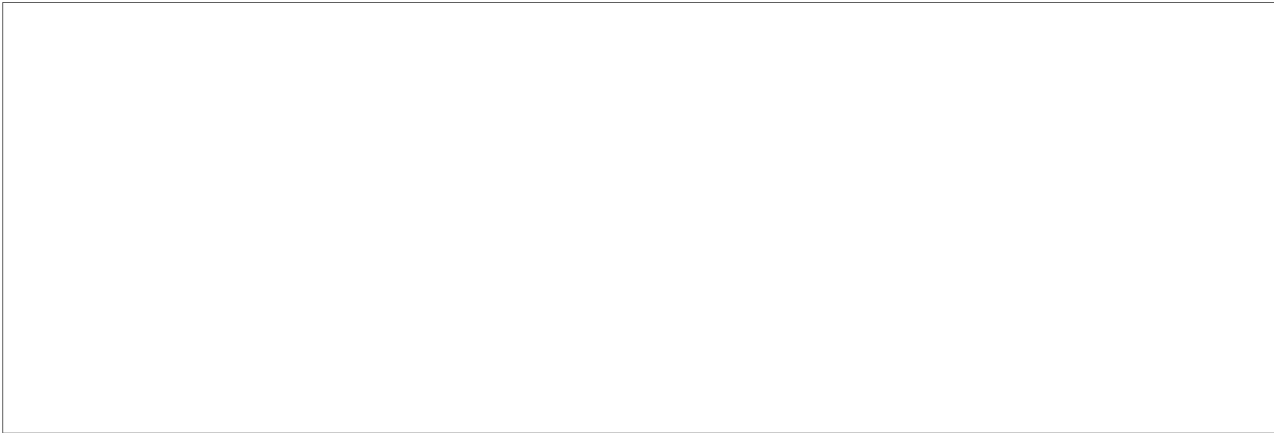


Table 2

Progress of Selected Soviet Weapons Development
and Deployment Programs

Spring-summer 1983	Continued testing of SS-X-24 ICBM and PL-5 ICBM
Summer 1983	Beginning of sea trials of the second Typhoon SSBN; compensatory dismantlement of 10th Y-I unit
Winter 1983-spring 1984	Possible deployment of long-range ALCM on Bear variant; possible deployment of long-range GLCM and SLCM <input type="text"/>

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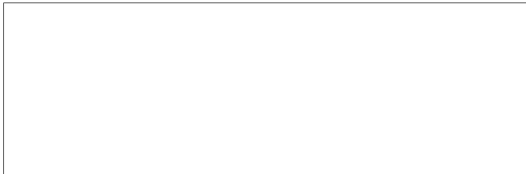
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