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To: The President-elect
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Subject: Defense and Arms Control Policy

DD/A Registry
 88-2519X

Early in a new Administration decisions about defense and arms control will have to be made during a period dominated by two conditions. First, Gorbachev will continue to present bold challenges to the established order of East-West relations, in the form of at least superficially attractive new foreign policy overtures and arms control proposals. Maintaining both the public support for necessary defense programs and cohesion in the alliance will be major challenges for the President in this environment. Second, the mismatch between the limited resources available for defense and the much higher spending profile required by earlier commitments to major weapons acquisition programs, together with weaknesses in defense management, will put extreme and early stress on the defense budget and defense management.

In this environment, decisions must be faced in the early days of the new Administration about the overall approach to both strategic and conventional arms control. For the Administration to be able to do this successfully, certain decisions must first be made about U.S. strategic and conventional force modernization and also about how to establish a common position with our allies. Unless we follow this sequence there is the severe risk that decisions about arms control negotiations will undercut both our weapons modernization efforts and our relations with our allies.

Other major decisions about the defense budget, unrelated to arms control and accompanying force modernization, must also be faced promptly—at least in broad outline. There are two reasons for this. The long-run (say four-year) profile of the defense budget will have much to do with overall federal fiscal planning for the entire Administration. Also, it will be necessary to focus quickly on DoD management problems, both to improve the efficiency of defense acquisition and to establish and maintain public and Congressional confidence in the management of DoD—a confidence that has been recently shaken.

Issue 1: Early Modernization and Force Structure Decisions and Associated Arms Control Issues

A. Strategic Forces

1. Command and Control. The first, and in many ways most important, strategic military issue for a President concerns the command and control of strategic forces. The President must see to it that the forces over which he is Commander-in-Chief not only strive for but achieve a perfection that is unique in human endeavor. The tragedies of the Stark and the Vincennes illustrate that in military activity, as in most human undertakings, two types of mistakes will occur, in spite of the best efforts to prevent them: real threats will be ignored, and false alarms will provoke a response.

Strategic command and control is critical, difficult, and complex because it can permit neither type of error. A potential aggressor must be certain that an attack, even a cleverly masked one, could not succeed. And most certainly there must be no retaliation in response to a false warning. Yet a command and control system designed to

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ensure that there are no mistakes of one type will tend to create a bias toward mistakes of the other. Such possible command and control mistakes should be considered in planning the forces themselves. For example, the increasing vulnerability of U.S. fixed targets (such as ICBMs in silos) caused by the steadily improving accuracy of Soviet strategic weapons puts pressure on the President to launch our silo-based ICBMs on warning alone, without waiting for confirmation of nuclear attack by actual nuclear detonations. Such a posture can increase the risk of accidental war. Moreover, other vulnerabilities, such as those of our satellites involved in warning and surveillance, can have serious implications for command and control—for example, such satellites might well come under attack during an earlier, conventional, phase of a conflict.

These sorts of problems illustrate that, in addition to the importance of the President's understanding the details of the strategic war plan so that he is familiar with its options, he has another major reason to understand the strategic command and control system in some detail: namely, it may lead him to want some changes in the system itself and it may also lead him to prefer some types of strategic force modernization to others as budget decisions are made.

The President, as an early priority, should assure himself that: his command and control system is adequate to ensure that he will receive not only immediate warning of an attack but an accurate characterization of its size and nature; that he will be able to communicate with his military forces under all circumstances throughout a conflict, including his strategic reserve forces; that he can communicate in a crisis with the American people and their political leaders, our allies, and our opponents; and that provisions for his own and his successor's security preclude a decapitation attack. Consequently, we suggest that the President should at the outset require a detailed review of strategic command and control from his personal perspective.

2. Strategic Offensive Force Modernization: Survivability. A continued effort will be required throughout the new Administration and for many years into the future in order to maintain survivable and effective strategic offensive forces. Regardless of improved U.S.-Soviet relations and arms control agreements, the Soviet capability to initiate strategic war against the U.S. will persist and a crisis or a political change in the Soviet Union could occur far faster than the U.S. could rebuild neglected strategic forces. Moreover, even with a START agreement, the Soviet ability to threaten all three parts of U.S. strategic forces, as well as their command and control, could continue to improve and U.S. forces will grow relatively more vulnerable over time unless force improvements are made. Soviet attack submarines and other anti-submarine warfare forces will be unconstrained by arms control and the Soviets will be free to continue to improve their capability (happily still a very limited one) against U.S. ballistic missile submarines. Soviet ballistic-missile and cruise-missile submarines and the weapons they carry will continue to be improved in their ability to threaten U.S. bombers on their bases and the U.S. command-and-control system. While the number of MIRVed accurate Soviet ICBM warheads that threaten U.S. silo-based ICBMs are likely to be constrained by a START treaty, those constraints will not be sufficient to ensure that U.S. silo-based ICBMs could survive a Soviet first strike.

A new problem for U.S. strategic force survivability will be created by the improving accuracy of MIRVed Soviet SLBMs; these as well as ICBMs may soon be capable of being used against hardened targets such as U.S. silos. Moreover, according to a

recent public statement by U.S. naval intelligence, the Soviets have tested short-range/short time-of-flight SLBM trajectories in support of pursuing a capability, announced as an objective this year by Admiral Gorshkov, of "covert launches from short ranges." Such launches could significantly reduce U.S. warning and response time. As the Scowcroft Commission pointed out over five years ago, once attack from Soviet submarines becomes feasible against both U.S. ICBM silos and bomber bases—executed in such a way that there could be a near-simultaneous launch and near-simultaneous detonation of close-in Soviet submarine-launched weapons on all urgent U.S. strategic targets—then the only highly survivable U.S. strategic forces will be ballistic missile submarines at sea. Under current planning and the restrictions of a START Treaty, there will only be about twelve or so of these at sea once the Trident submarine force fully replaces the older boats. They will carry, to be sure, some 2,300 warheads. But this is many eggs in very few baskets.

A central question thus becomes, is a dozen large Trident submarines at sea sufficient as a strategic force that could survive a surprise Soviet attack, or is some other force needed, such as similarly-survivable ICBMs? The previous Administration answered that question by choosing a system of ICBM mobility—rail-garrison MX—but one that would require several hours of strategic warning, and a quick reaction to that warning, to make that mobility effective. But if the U.S. could count firmly both on obtaining strategic warning some hours in advance of a Soviet attack and on being able to act upon such warning, then a large portion of our existing strategic forces would be survivable and available to the Commander-in-Chief—whether or not any steps are taken to augment Trident with a more survivable ICBM force. For example, with such hours of strategic warning many bombers could be flushed from their bases, and additional submarines put to sea. But if the President decides that, to augment Trident, an ICBM force is needed that could clearly ride out a *surprise* attack, then rail-garrison MX will be inadequate—he will need to consider either an ICBM basing mode adequate to that challenge or strategic defenses. For example, to ensure that some of the ICBM force could survive surprise attack any of several ICBMs might be placed in a new type of multiple-shelter, *i.e.*, a shell game, deployment—one using much less land than the MX multiple-shelter basing scheme of a decade ago. (The system is called "carry-hard" because it transports the missile in a hardened canister between simple vertical shelters.) Alternatively, a small mobile ICBM in hard mobile launchers, *i.e.* without shelters, might be deployed on a large military base in the Southwest (with single warheads), at existing Minuteman bases (possibly with two warheads), or at both locations. Or more than one of these options might be kept alive by pursuing them at a gradual pace. To keep any such option alive, the current U.S. position in the START Talks, that mobile ICBMs should be banned, would have to be reversed.

But speed in *implementing* a decision about ICBM modernization is much less important than realizing that the decision about whether a portion of the ICBM force needs to be able to survive a surprise attack is logically a precondition for many other decisions that will need to be made about strategic forces, both offensive and defensive, and about arms control. Moreover, such a decision needs to be politically supportable by the Congress and the public to be effective.

The choice about whether to pursue, or to preserve the option for, such ICBM survivability is in many ways the most important decision that the President will make

about strategic forces, since so much else derives from it. We would suggest that a decision about this issue should not be delayed beyond the first few months of the new Administration, in order to avoid many other decisions necessarily being made in an uncoordinated manner.

For example, if the President decides that no substantial part of the ICBM force need be survivable against a surprise attack of the sort that the Soviets might be able to launch against ICBMs and bomber bases in the 1990s, then reliance on the survivability of the U.S. ballistic missile submarine force would be very heavy indeed, and the pace of modernizing the submarine force could be significantly affected. An earlier decision would need to be made about whether more submarines would be needed sooner, and whether new submarine and possibly new missile designs should be accelerated.

With respect to arms control, the limitation of nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) could also be affected by the ICBM decision. In the absence of an ICBM force that is capable of surviving a surprise attack, the President might feel that it is necessary to retain a number of nuclear SLCMs in order to add to the number of submarines and other ships that the Soviets would need to plan to attack in any first strike. The difficulty of verifying SLCM limitations, the foreign policy problems with allies (e.g., Japan) if the locations of nuclear SLCMs are publicly identified, the importance of conventional-warhead cruise missiles (which could be affected by some types of proposed limits on nuclear ones), and possible NATO reliance on nuclear SLCMs for theatre nuclear forces in the aftermath of the INF Treaty are all complicating factors in arriving at a decision on nuclear-armed SLCMs. To some, these factors suggest that there should be no, or very limited, SLCM restrictions in any case. To others, especially if the U.S. deploys a survivable ICBM, and given the geographic asymmetries favoring the U.S.S.R., these factors indicate the wisdom of a ban or limits on nuclear armed SLCMs. Since this SLCM question affects not only strategic and NATO force modernization but arms control as well, an early decision is imperative. Whatever is decided, it is obvious that the U.S. negotiating position on SLCMs (where the U.S. now resists limits) should be coordinated with that on mobile ICBMs (where the U.S. now supports a ban).

Finally, the issue of the political acceptability of START to the Senate will be influenced by the above questions. If the U.S. has a survivable ICBM (e.g., a "carry-hard" or a small mobile), the throw-weight reductions in START further enhance such a system's survivability. But if the U.S. maintains silo-based ICBMs, the launcher reductions in START make it *harder* to maintain the survivability of our ICBM force because they limit the number of U.S. silos without effectively limiting the threat to them from MIRVed Soviet ICBMs and, increasingly, from Soviet SLBMs. Verification of precise numbers also becomes militarily more important in the latter case. Ultimately, the question is whether two-thirds of the Senate could be expected to approve a START agreement if a responsible case can be made that it, together with U.S. force planning decisions, would leave the U.S. with only a dozen at-sea submarines as highly-survivable forces in the case of a surprise attack.

In view of the above, we recommend that the President require an immediate and thorough review of the strategic force and arms control implications of the decision whether or not to maintain an ICBM force of which a substantial portion could survive a surprise attack.