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12 May 1988

MEMO FOR: NIO/GPF

SUBJECT: Possible SNIE on Soviet Unilateral Force Cuts

I think this is a needed effort. I recommend inclusion of two aspects as yet uncovered by your key questions and outline.

First, the estimate must cover the internal political struggle that would inevitably attend (or is currently attending) any Soviet decision on a unilateral force cut, whether the motivation be economic, military, or political-diplomatic. The issue of unilateralism in arms control or reduction has already become something of a political macho test within the Soviet leadership, with Gorbachev's apparent partisans seeking to develop the rationale for it and the military, presumably with conservative political backing, against it. My guess is that Gorbachev does not have the political clout necessary for such a move at present; he may or may not come out of the current round of political infighting with such power. But this is something the estimate must clearly address.

Second, without delving into a detailed statement of our collection posture (which the DO would rightly object to), I think the estimate should record a judgment as to how much "warning" of a Soviet decision or announcement we might expect to get. With all the blather that glasnost has generated, we might get a fair degree of warning.

Let me make a couple of suggestions about the approach. I think the SNIE ought to be very short. Clearly it must be based on assessments the full explication of which could be very lengthy, i.e., a) how Gorbachev might see the Soviet economy profiting from unilateral force cuts, and b) how Soviet security requirements might, with appropriate adjustments, still be met. These should not be contained in the estimate but published elsewhere and summarized in the estimate. If they don't now exist, they've got to be done. Furthermore, I believe strongly that the substance of the problem should be argued through in a series of conferences and briefings involving the authoritative analysts and agency reps before somebody sits down to draft the SNIE. If the substance of this project, including disagreements about it, is collectively understood, the SNIE could be drafted on a weekend.

  
Fritz Ermarth  
C/NIC

cc: VC/NIC, NIOs/USSR, EUR, ECON, SP, DIR/AG

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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC# 01712-88  
11 May 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM: MG Larry D. Budge, USA  
National Intelligence Officer  
for General Purpose Forces

SUBJECT: Possible SNIE: Likelihood and Implications of a Soviet  
Conventional Arms Control "Breakout" [REDACTED]

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1. Several convergent circumstances may have put the Soviets into a position where unilateral conventional arms reductions or deep cut proposals will serve their national interests and place the US in a reactive posture:

- The massive procurement of Soviet armaments from the early 1970s to the 1980s has provided a large modernized combined arms force.
- Retention of obsolescent arms provides a huge Soviet/Warsaw Pact inventory of relatively less effective, man-intensive weaponry ripe for retirement.
- The Soviet economy is not responding to perestroika, forcing Gorbachev to examine unproductive sectors of the Soviet economy for cuts/transfers.
- Perestroika will create unprecedented demands for skilled Slavic technicians coincident with a declining manpower pool.
- Gorbachev's public relations blitz seeks to portray a less threatening, more accommodating, civilianized Soviet Union.
- The recent INF agreement and publicity regarding possible 50 percent cuts in strategic arms have led to heightened expectations among the Western public that further conventional cuts are in the offering.
- Western (particularly US) economies would be considerably improved at this time by reduced defense expenditures. [REDACTED]

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2. The foregoing circumstances appear to offer the Soviet leadership a significant opportunity to take the initiative in conventional arms control with little apparent cost. Deep cuts in old equipment provide some immediate returns in operations and maintenance funds and skilled manpower which could be transferred to more productive economic sectors. Offers of, or actual, deep conventional arms cuts might place a transitional US administration in a position where hasty responses could erode the conventional imbalance even further in the Soviets' favor, particularly in Central Europe, and no response would further erode the US image in world opinion. A SNIE outlining possible Soviet initiatives, their effect on Soviet warfighting capability, and probable allied reaction to these initiatives would enable US policymakers to draw up and coordinate in advance with allies alternative responses to a range of major actions by the Soviets in conventional arms control. An alternative format might be a typescript coordinated within the NIC rather than the Intelligence Community. Draft Key Questions and Terms of Reference are attached.

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3. Would appreciate any comments or suggestions which you might have to include feasibility, format, and possible drafters.

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Larry D. Budge

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SNIE: Likelihood and Implications of a Soviet Conventional Arms Control "Breakout"

KEY QUESTIONS

- I. Does the next year or so provide an unusual opportunity for the Soviets to profit from deep conventional arms control initiatives--diplomatically, economically, militarily?
- II. What significant cuts might the Soviets propose/unilaterally take, and what would the results be on the military balance? What are the likelihoods of various initiatives and why?
- III. What are likely reactions of NATO/other Allies of the US to some possible US responses?

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SNIE: Likelihood and Implications of a Soviet Conventional Arms Control "Breakout"

TERMS OF REFERENCE

SCOPE NOTE

I. Background:

- ° Recent arms control activity
- ° Soviet foreign relations factors
- ° Soviet economic factors
- ° Allied expectations
- ° Western economic factors [redacted]

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II. Soviet Conventional Arms Reduction Opportunities (Category and Effects):

- Naval arms
  - Inset: Surface SLCMs and nuclear weapons-free zones
- ° Air Arms
  - Inset: The integrated air defense support package
- ° Ground Arms
  - Inset: The corps-brigade reorganization
- ° Other Arms
- ° Warsaw Pact-wide effects
  - Inset: A Rand study on Central European conventional arms cuts

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III. Likelihood of Various Soviet Initiatives (above) [redacted]

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IV Overall Implications for NATO and US [redacted]

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