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Evolving Soviet Strategy Toward LRTNF Negotiations

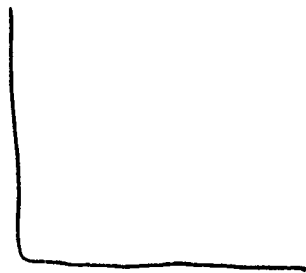
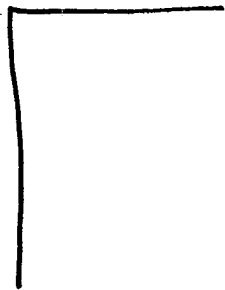
National Intelligence Council
Memorandum

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National Intelligence Council
Memorandum

*Information available as of 3 September 1981
was used in the preparation of this Memorandum.*

This Memorandum has been prepared (1) to alert the intelligence and policymaking communities to certain significant new trends in current Soviet policy toward the LRTNF negotiations and (2) to test some early propositions concerning this Soviet development. It has been discussed with the Offices of Strategic Research and Political Analysis, and has been approved by the National Intelligence Council [

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Evolving Soviet Strategy Toward LRTNF Negotiations

Summary

As NATO approaches LRTNF negotiations, note should be taken of what clearly appears to be an evolving, conscious multifaceted Soviet strategy toward LRTNF—in place of earlier Soviet ambiguities and uncertainties on this issue. The evolving LRTNF strategy, moreover, seems to be well integrated into the broader Soviet propaganda and diplomatic campaigns aimed at Western Europe. The key element of this strategy is the presentation of a data base designed to serve a broad range of Soviet objectives:

- On the immediate military level and as the highest priority, to prevent the modernization of NATO LRTNF.
- On the negotiating level, to construct the data base to exclude Soviet nuclear systems that the Soviets do not wish to discuss (for example, the SS-12/22).
- On the strategic level, to undercut US efforts aimed at strengthening the links between various levels and theaters of war.
- On the political level, to foster the sentiment that the security of Europe could be jeopardized by the United States for its own selfish ends and that the future of Europe should be decided by the Europeans themselves.

Evolving Soviet Strategy Toward LRTNF Negotiations

The Data Base

Earlier Soviet statements on the LRTNF data base did not seem well thought out and made inconsistent references to some 1,200 and 1,500 Western weapon systems. In late July a public and authoritative statement eliminated that earlier vagueness. Writing in *Pravda*, Marshal Ustinov claimed that NATO and the USSR each had approximately 1,000 medium-range nuclear weapons. For the West this number included about 700 US aircraft carrying nuclear weapons (F-111s and F-4s stationed in Europe, FB-111 medium-range bombers, A-6s and A-7s on aircraft carriers) and about 300 other nuclear systems based in Europe ("land-based medium-range ballistic missiles, missile submarines and the bomber force of US allies"). Ustinov gave no details about the composition of the Soviet medium-range force.

At about the same time that Ustinov's article appeared, a Soviet Embassy official

repeated Ustinov's listing of US aircraft and identified the other 300 nuclear systems as encompassing the French S-2 and S-3 missiles, the British Polaris missiles, the French submarine-launched M-20s, the British Vulcan and Buccaneer bombers, and the French Mirage bombers. He described the Soviet systems as encompassing the SS-4, SS-5, and SS-20 missiles and the Backfire, Blinder, and Badger aircraft.

The Soviet Embassy official's list did not include the Pershing I. Ustinov's statement was open to different interpretations about whether the "land-based medium-range ballistic missiles" included the US Pershing I or just those missiles belonging to US allies. The Embassy official's omission of both the US and German Pershing I's from his otherwise comprehensive listing strongly suggests that the Soviets have decided to exclude these missiles from the negotiations.

Both Ustinov and the Soviet Embassy official repeated the often-cited Soviet claims that the SS-20s

are part of a normal modernization program and do not affect the existing balance. Ustinov also charged that the projected deployment in Europe of some 600 US medium-range missiles would upset the existing regional balance in NATO's favor and would represent a strategic threat to the USSR. Ustinov then referred to Brezhnev's longstanding offer of a mutual moratorium on new deployments and negotiations about existing systems.

Main Soviet Themes

These most recent authoritative statements show that the Soviets now have integrated their initial LRTNF strategy into their broader propaganda and diplomatic campaigns to influence European opinion. The Soviets realize that they have little or no chance of directly converting any West European nation. They can influence individual countries on some specific issues (for instance, Norway on the nuclear-free zone idea) and influential segments of the public inside individual countries on other issues (for instance, anti-ERW groups). The accomplishment of either goal makes the accomplishment of the other easier. Accomplishing both together on the same issue (for example, excluding Holland from the NATO LRTNF decision and influencing West German groups in the same direction) could undermine NATO's decisionmaking process and, in the longer run, jeopardize the existence of the alliance.

In linking their LRTNF strategy to their broader campaign, the Soviets use three underlying themes, all of which can be employed singly or jointly, implicitly or explicitly, in the manner best suited to the audience:

- The LRTNF situation must be seen in the wider context of other US actions that are intended to upset the balance and will increase international tensions. Some of the favorite Soviet examples are US inaction on the SAL II treaty, the MX missile, and now the "neutron bomb." The US LRTNF

plans are an attempt to embroil Europe in dangerous US schemes.

- NATO will upset the existing balance if it bows to US wishes. The Soviet Union is willing to negotiate for a lowering of the existing balance but, as a first step toward the negotiations, NATO should freeze its planned deployments. Such a freeze, however, is not a precondition for talks.
- Questions affecting Europe can best be handled in a regional context; that is, they can best be resolved by the Europeans themselves—meaning the USSR and West Europeans without US participation. While the US military presence in Europe makes such a Pan-European dialogue impossible in the short term, West European nations can still play a useful role by inducing the United States to adopt a more yielding position. In the long term, however, European security would be strengthened by decoupling from the United States. This theme fits into the broader Soviet line that the US presence in Europe is only transitory whereas the inhabitants of that continent are there to stay and should determine their own destiny.

Soviet Tactics

The tactical elements of the Soviet LRTNF strategy are the following:

- Argue that TNF parity already exists.
- Establish a data base to support that argument by excluding from it all Soviet nuclear systems in Eastern Europe (even those clearly intended for missions beyond the ground battlefield such as SU-17 and SU-24 aircraft and Scud missiles) and also the SS-12/22 missiles based in the USSR. The Soviet omission of the Pershing I can serve this Soviet purpose by encouraging the Allies not to bring up these Soviet nuclear systems. Should the West refer to these systems anyway, the Soviets could bring up the Pershing I's and even generously offer to reduce some of their own systems if the Pershing I's were reduced *and* not replaced by any other system (that is, no Pershing II).
- Maintain that SS-20s are natural follow-ons to older systems, are replacing those systems on a 1-for-1 and

sometimes even 1-for-2 basis, and do not upset the regional balance.

- Charge that the Pershing II's and GLCMs are new systems, which upset the existing balance between East and West.
- Try to have it both ways, at least initially, by describing them as upsetting both the regional balance and the central balance (the latter being defined as US and Soviet systems that can hit the other country's territory).
- By having it both ways initially, retain flexibility about whether these systems belong in LRTNF or SAL negotiations. Nevertheless, place great emphasis on their potential for upsetting the central balance.
- Exclude from LRTNF consideration existing systems counted under SALT—for example, Poseidon missiles even if they are committed to SACEUR.

Implications of Soviet Strategy

The consistent aim of the Soviets since NATO began its LRTNF deliberations has been and remains to prevent the introduction of longer range systems into the NATO inventory. Moscow now realizes that it can further that aim best by supplementing its standard "detente" arguments with at least the appearance of a serious dialogue about LRTNF negotiations. At the current stage Moscow is successfully creating that appearance by discussing the data base for the negotiations in such a way as simultaneously to further its broader strategic aims.

These strategic aims may not be readily apparent since, at first glance, the Soviet approach to the data base may seem acceptable. After all, it seems to be based on two eminently reasonable principles: (1) only existing systems can be reduced and thus be a fit subject for discussion and (2) systems should be assigned to either the LRTNF or SAL negotiations. There might be some argument about which systems should be included and about their true numbers but the principles seem unexceptionable.

These principles, however, are merely the superstructure of a strategy centered on the Pershing II's and GLCMs. As noted the Soviets are scoring debating points by charging that these missiles could upset both the regional and the central balance. By excluding them from the LRTNF data base and by expressing fears about the danger they could present to the Soviet homeland, the Soviets are trying to create the impression that these missiles are intended primarily for the prosecution of a central war. On the propaganda level, this approach allows Moscow to play on European fears that the United States is introducing these systems to confine any nuclear exchange to European territory and thus spare the United States from damage. On the important strategic level this approach is intended to shape both the intra-NATO and the NATO-USSR dialogue around false notions of clearly defined independent theaters of war.

The premise of finite and practically independent theaters of war contrasts sharply with the Soviets' own approach to war. Even though the Soviets do distinguish between strategic, operational, and tactical actions, they have always recognized the connections between the three levels and the effect of theater operations on the strategic position of the Soviet Union. Consequently they have consistently emphasized the need to control and direct operations in all theaters from Moscow, which could use all means at its disposal to gain the desired objectives. In the last few years the Soviets have laid particular stress on the widened scope of theater operations and on the necessity of being able to conduct integrated theater operations. They have increased their capabilities to do so not only through improvements in their LRTNF but also through changes in their command arrangements—for example, the re-creation of theater military commands and important modifications in the Air Force structure. Their public espousal of neatly delineated central and regional balances does not reflect actual Soviet thinking and planning.

This declaratory approach to LRTNF, however, is particularly useful to the Soviets because it attempts to undercut US countervailing strategy, which includes efforts to strengthen the links between various levels and theaters of war. By claiming that the United States intends to use European basing to further its own aggressive designs against the USSR, Moscow is trying to prevent the linkage that originally was demanded by the Europeans themselves and that is intended to protect Europe. As good Clausewitzians, the Soviets are opening the LRTNF campaign by trying to entice the opponent into battles over specifics while they attack the opponent's strategy by setting the conceptual framework.

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