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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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November 3, 1986

NATIONAL SECURITY STUDY
DIRECTIVE NO. 6-86

CONVENTIONAL FORCES MODERNIZATION (U)

In NSDD-238 I directed that the United States in concert with our Allies be capable of deterring war against the United States and its Allies across the spectrum of conflict from nuclear war through conventional non-nuclear conflict to limited conflict and terrorism. While we have pursued effective ways to rapidly modernize our strategic nuclear forces, countering the evolving non-nuclear threat demands an equivalent emphasis on integrating our priorities for conventional modernization. (S)(u)

The concept of deterrence is complex, especially in the conventional context. Ultimately, it depends on an adversary making a coherent assessment that the combination of U.S. and Allied national wills, force structures, doctrine, and military capability is such that the use of force against the U.S. or its Allies will fail. The changing nature of the competition between the free world and its potential enemies requires us periodically to reexamine the strengths and weaknesses of ourselves, our Allies and our adversaries. (U)

As we assess the intentions and capabilities of our potential adversaries, we must face the reality that not all factors are obviously in our favor. The free world is unlikely to match the Soviet bloc in force structure or sustained investment in military capability. We must, therefore, continue to refine and improve our operational concepts, and doctrines while finding ways quickly to develop and integrate the most promising of emerging technologies into our force structure. The combination of those efforts will better focus our strengths against Soviet weakness. (S)(u)

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Declassify on: OADR

Declassified/Released on 3/27/95
under provisions of E.O. 12356
by D. Van Tassel, National Security Council
(F88-738)

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Our nuclear strategy and the Strategic Modernization Program that supports it is framed by the SIOP and our concept of the TRIAD, and has been clearly explained in a series of National Security Decision Directives. Our conventional strategy is much more complex. The Services have widely diverse missions in the spectrum of conventional warfare. To accomplish their tasks they have developed separate doctrines, organizations and tactics. Melding these differing operational views into a coherent conventional strategy presents a challenge in the continuously changing international environment. This problem is magnified by the general diversity of potential contingencies presented by the vast spectrum of conventional, non-nuclear conflict. On a theater level, regional strategies have been developed by the Unified CINCs. We now need further work to forge these theater strategies into an integrated global strategy which can serve as the basis for further developing our conventional force programs. (S)(u)

As we develop our global strategy and the conventional modernization program that supports it, we must be mindful of the relationship between nuclear and conventional deterrence. Our long term objective of reducing our reliance on nuclear weapons, if successful, will demand special attention to maintaining the effectiveness of our conventional deterrent, in concert with our Allies. (S)(u)

To begin this process the Secretary of Defense should develop a conventional modernization program which articulates the key elements comprising the program, together with their rationales. Those rationales should relate the program's elements to requirements which are based on warfighting concepts that support the national military strategy consistent with the broader national security strategy approved in NSDD-238. This program should be developed this fall concurrent with the planning milestones developed in response to NSDD-219 that will lead to appropriate revision of Defense Guidance in February 1987. Early completion of the conventional modernization program will also assist in the presentation and support of the FY 88 defense budget. (S)(u)

The DOD program should also include a draft NSDD outlining a proposed longer term Conventional Forces Modernization Program which the Secretary of Defense should submit to me for approval not later than 31 December 1986. (S)(u)

Ronald Reagan