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WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Ronald Reagan Library

Collection Name MATLOCK, JACK: FILES

Withdrawer

JET 4/14/2005

File Folder MATLOCK CHRON FEBRUARY 1986 (1/6)

FOIA

F06-114/4

Box Number 14

YARHI-MILO

1408

ID	Doc Type	Document Description	No of Pages	Doc Date	Restrictions
8078	MEMO	MATLOCK TO POINDEXTER RE REPLY TO GORBACHEV'S HANDWRITTEN LETTER <i>R 3/20/2013 F2006-114/4</i>	3	2/1/1986	B1
8079	LETTER	DRAFT REPLY PRESIDENT REAGAN TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV <i>R 3/20/2013 F2006-114/4</i>	6	ND	B1
8080	MEMO	MATLOCK TO LEHMAN; LINHARD; AND SESTANOVICH RE REPLY TO GORBACHEV'S HANDWRITTEN LETTER <i>R 3/9/2011 F2006-114/4</i>	3	2/3/1986	B1
8081	MEMO	SAME TEXT AS DOC #8079 <i>R 3/20/2013 F2006-114/4</i>	6	ND	B1
8082	MEMO	DRAFT REPLY PRESIDENT REAGAN TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV <i>R 3/9/2011 F2006-114/4</i>	6	ND	B1
8083	MEMO	DRAFT REPLY PRESIDENT REAGAN TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV <i>R 3/9/2011 F2006-114/4</i>	6	ND	B1

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

B-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]

B-2 Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]

B-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]

B-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]

B-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]

B-7 Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]

B-8 Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]

B-9 Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

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WITHDRAWAL SHEET

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YARHI-MILO

1408

ID	Doc Type	Document Description	No of Pages	Doc Date	Restrictions
8084	MEMO	DRAFT REPLY PRESIDENT REAGAN TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV <i>R 3/9/2011 F2006-114/4</i>	5	2/11/1986	B1

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- B-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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Matlock

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~EYES ONLY~~
~~SECRET / SENSITIVE~~

~~ADM. POINDEXTER~~

AMB. MATLOCK

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CAS 7/2/02

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~

February 1, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JM*

SUBJECT: Reply to Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter

I have tried my hand at drafting a reply to Gorbachev's handwritten letter, as we discussed earlier. Although I believe that most of the materials are now in place to put an answer to the letter of January 14 together, I believe that an answer to the handwritten letter should precede it and should not try to address the specific questions raised in the January 14 letter.

My reasons are the following:

-- The exchange of handwritten letters may have started a process of direct informal personal communication which should be preserved. Thus there should be a specific answer to the long handwritten letter of December 24.

-- The letter of January 14 had an entirely different status. By going public, and also sending the same "proposals" to other chiefs of state, Gorbachev was clearly signalling that he did not intend this to be a confidential personal message to the President. It should, therefore be handled entirely separately.

-- Gorbachev's handwritten letter contains a number of allegations which need to be refuted lest the impression be left that we accept them, or feel at a disadvantage in finding contrary arguments.

-- The handwritten letter can be answered on its own terms, without getting into some of the issues which need to be addressed in the reply to the letter of January 14.

My suggested draft is at Tab I. It is longer than I would like, but I feel it is desirable for the President to answer in adequate detail the principal arguments Gorbachev advanced. It is slightly but not significantly longer than Gorbachev's letter.

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~

DECLASSIFIED

NLRR FOI-114/4 #8078
BY RW NARA DATE 3/20/13

In drafting it, I had the following considerations in mind:

-- I tried to reply directly to the observations and arguments Gorbachev made, to indicate that the President takes them seriously even if he rejects them.

-- I also tried to give considerable space to Afghanistan, Libya and regional conflict in general. This will build on what the President has said before and lay the groundwork for linking the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons to solution of these issues. The comments on Libya are designed both to put a marker down that they are playing with fire, and also to play on the danger to the Soviet Union of getting too close to an unstable character like Qaddhafi. (This latter point doubtless gives the Soviets real concern, and we should do what we can to heighten it.)

-- On the nuclear and SDI issues, I tried to answer Gorbachev's arguments without impinging in any way on the content of our response to his January "proposals." In particular, I think it important to let him know that his argument about SDI being part of a first-strike strategy is simply not going to fly in the light of Soviet activities, and in fact can be used against them if they persist. As you will note, I put in a plug for military-to-military contacts in the context of Gorbachev's allegations concerning disarming first-strike weapons in U.S. hands.

-- Regarding the NST negotiations, the draft makes abundantly clear that we do not consider our November proposals to be superceded by the Gorbachev January letter, but expect serious negotiation on them.

-- As for Gorbachev's January "proposals," I tried in various subtle but unmistakable ways to convey that the way they were presented did not promote a favorable negotiating climate. In deferring an answer to them and putting the answer in a more formal channel, the President would be implicitly telling Gorbachev that he knows much of the "Gorbachev initiative" was designed for propaganda and this makes it unsuitable for serious, totally private communication. At the same time, he does not knock the "proposals" directly. I believe this approach is more effective than direct criticism of Gorbachev's going public; complaints on the latter might convey the impression that we feel vulnerable. They also would leave us open to counter complaints that we are also guilty of leaking or announcing our proposals.

-- Regarding the Washington summit, I omitted any reference to it. Although Gorbachev had one reference to it in his letter (the line about the correspondence being "a very important channel in preparing" for it), he did not reciprocate the President's statement that he was looking forward to the meeting. Given the Soviet delay in setting a date it is probably best not

to show too much eagerness, but rather to make clear that we are not going to make substantive concessions just to get him here at the time we proposed.

-- Finally, on the way they address each other, I noted that the President tried to move to a less formal salutation in his own handwritten letter ("Dear General Secretary Gorbachev"), while Gorbachev did not pick this up, but continued to address the President as "Dear Mr. President." Though this is a trivial point, I believe that the President should follow Gorbachev's lead and revert to the "Dear Mr. General Secretary." Russians are so form-conscious they notice these little things and the fact that Gorbachev did not write back with a "Dear President Reagan" was doubtless deliberate.

I will be working with Lehman and Linhard on the reply to the January 14 letter. I think it important, however, for the handwritten letter to precede it by several days.

I have not shown this text to anyone else, since I am not certain whether you want the handwritten exchange to be subject to vetting on the staff or with other agencies. I would appreciate your reaction and instructions on this point.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That you indicate your reaction to the text, noting any changes you desire.

Approve f *It's a very good letter, Jack.* Disapprove

2. That you indicate what sort of consultation or clearance you desire.

a. I'll handle myself ;

OR

b. Consult and clear with the following:

Ron Lehman, Bob Lindad, Steve Sestanovich
after Pres signs, I'll show to Shultz & Weinberger before it goes.

3. Should I draft a Memorandum to the President to cover it?

Yes f No

Attachments:

Tab I - Draft for reply to Gorbachev Handwritten Letter of December 24, 1985

Tab II - Translation of Gorbachev letter of December 24, 1985

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1

4

DRAFT REPLY TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Your letter of December 24, 1985, was most thought-provoking and I would like to share my reactions with you. I have of course also received your letter of January 14, 1986, and will be responding to it shortly. However, since the substance of the latter is already in the public domain, I believe it is well to keep our private communications separate. Some of the issues are of course the same, but I would hope that in this informal fashion we can continue our candid exchange on some of the fundamental issues facing us.

I agree with you that we need to set a specific agenda for discussion over the next few years, directed at a steady and -- I would hope -- radical improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. I suggested two such topics in my previous letter, and I would like to suggest now a broad three-part agenda which I believe would serve that purpose. That is, first, to find ways to reduce and eventually eliminate the use and threat of force in solving international disputes; second, to reach mutually acceptable agreements to reduce the level of arms, particularly those of mass destruction; and third, to take other steps which bolster confidence in dealing with each other and reduce distrust.

These are of course broad categories and they are also interrelated, for progress in one area makes it easier in the others. I also believe that history has shown that improvements in one area cannot long withstand an increase of tensions in the others. How many times in the past has an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations been reversed by actions which one or the other side considered fundamentally inconsistent with an improvement in relations? Unfortunately, this has occurred every time in the past when relations seemed to be on the road to improvement. The lesson, I believe, is clear: if we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past which doomed every trend toward improvement, we must take a broader view of the relationship than any single issue, however important it may be.

Without expecting to solve all issues at once, we must seek to solve problems in each of these three areas concurrently. It was with this in mind that I made my earlier suggestion regarding goals we might set before our next meeting. Finding a practical way to reduce our nuclear arsenals is certainly one of these key issues -- though by no means the only one. I am encouraged that we can agree that our ultimate goal is to eliminate nuclear weapons, and that we also agree that, as a first step, these arsenals should be cut by half. I also agree that we must make decisions not on the basis of assurances or intentions but with regard to the capabilities on both sides.

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BY RW NARA DATE 3/20/13

Nevertheless, I do not understand the reasoning behind your conclusion that only a country preparing a disarming first strike would be interested in defenses against ballistic missiles. (By such reasoning, one could "prove" that all countries involved in World War II intended to use poison gas, because they issued gas masks to their troops.) Though it may be true that, in a world totally free of nuclear weapons, elaborate defenses against nuclear attack would not be necessary, we have not yet created such a world and we both recognize the difficult task we have set for ourselves in moving in that direction. Should such defenses prove feasible in the future, they could facilitate further reductions of nuclear weapons by creating a feeling of confidence that national security could be preserved without them.

Of course, as I have said before, I recognize that adding defensive systems to an arsenal replete with weapons with a disarming first-strike capability could indeed be destabilizing. But this is not what we are proposing, and in fact it is why we are proposing that both sides concentrate first on reducing those weapons which can be used to deliver a disarming first strike. If neither of our countries have weapons suitable for a first strike, why should either fear that defenses against ballistic missiles would make a first strike strategy possible?

I also do not understand your statement that what you call "space strike weapons" are "all purpose" weapons. If that is the case, you must know something of weapon types and physical phenomena unknown to us. I have asked previously for concrete examples, and would still appreciate at least some concrete hint as to what you have in mind. As I understand it, the sort of directed-energy and kinetic devices both our countries are investigating in the context of ballistic missile defense are potentially most effective against point targets moving at high velocity in space. They do not have the capability of mass destruction on earth, and if one were planning to strike earth targets from space, it does not seem rational to resort to such expensive and exotic techniques. Their destructiveness can never approach that of the nuclear weapons in our hands today. Nuclear weapons are the real problem.

Mr. General Secretary, in the spirit of candor which is essential to effective communication, I would add another point. You speak often of "space strike weapons," and your representatives have defined these as weapons which can strike targets in space from earth and its atmosphere, and weapons in space which can strike targets in space or on earth. I must ask, "What country has such weapons?" The answer is, only one: the Soviet Union. Your ABM system deployed around Moscow can strike targets beyond the atmosphere and has been tested in that mode. Your co-orbital anti-satellite weapon is designed to destroy satellites. And our specialists consider it most likely that the new missile we call the SA-X-12 also is capable of destroying targets above the

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atmosphere. Furthermore, the Soviet Union began research in defenses utilizing directed energy before the United States did and seems well along in research (and -- incidentally -- some testing outside laboratories) of lasers and other forms of directed energy.

I do not point this out in reproach. In our opinion, none of these things as yet violates any agreement between our countries. But if we were to follow your logic to the effect that what you call "space strike weapons" would only be developed by a country planning a first strike, what would we think? We see the Soviet Union devoting enormous resources to defensive systems, in an effort which antedates by many years our own effort, and we see a Soviet Union which has built up its counterforce weapons in numbers far greater than our own. If the only reason to develop defensive weapons is to make a disarming first strike possible, then clearly we should be even more concerned than we have been.

We are concerned, and deeply so. But not because you are developing -- and unlike us deploying -- defensive weaponry. We are concerned over the fact that the Soviet Union for some reason has chosen to deploy a much larger number of weapons suitable for a disarming first strike than has the United States. There may be reasons for this other than actually seeking a first-strike advantage, but we too must look at capabilities rather than intentions. And the fact is that we are certain you have such an advantage in this area.

Frankly, you have been misinformed if your specialists say that the missiles on our Trident submarines have a capability to destroy hardened missile silos -- a capability your SS-18 definitely has. Current Trident missiles lack the accuracy for such a role. They could be used only to retaliate. Nor is the Pershing II, which cannot even reach most Soviet strategic weapons, a potential first-strike weapon. Its short flight time is not substantially different from that of the more capable -- and much more numerous -- Soviet SS-20's aimed at our European Allies whom we are pledged to defend and most of whom have no nuclear capability of their own. We are just beginning to deploy missiles with a capability to strike Soviet silos, and we are doing so only because we cannot accept a situation in which the Soviet Union holds such a clear advantage in first-strike weaponry. Even if we unfortunately are required to complete all these planned deployments in the absence of a strategic arms accord which limits them, they will not match the number of Soviet weapons with a first-strike capability.

If our military specialists disagree regarding the capability of the weapons on the other side, then by all means let us arrange for them to meet and discuss their respective concerns. They don't have to exchange blueprints or divulge technical secrets, but a frank discussion of their respective assessments and the

reasons for them could perhaps clear up those misunderstandings which are not based on fact.

In any event, I agree with you that we must move to stop this cycle of action (or perceived action) and reaction. That is surely the first task of our negotiators at Geneva. Our position remains that we are willing to reduce those strategic weapons systems which the Soviet Union finds threatening so long as the Soviet Union will reduce those which pose a special threat to the United States. Our proposals in November represented a major step to accommodate your concerns and I hope that your negotiators will be empowered to discuss them thoroughly during the current round.

So far as defensive systems are concerned, I would reiterate what I wrote before: if your concern is that such systems may be used to permit a first-strike strategy, or as a cover for basing weapons of mass destruction in space, then there must be practical ways our negotiators can find to prevent such possibilities. I invite you to have your negotiators join ours in a practical discussion of these matters. Of course, I have in mind not general assurances but concrete, verifiable means which both sides can rely on to avoid these contingencies, neither of which is a part of United States strategy or planning.

Regarding regional conflicts, I can see that our respective analyses of the causes are totally incompatible. There seems little point in continuing to debate those matters on which we are bound to disagree. The important question is where we go from here; how we act to reduce the level of violence in the world, particularly in those places where our own forces are involved. This is not a trivial issue. It is also not unrelated to our efforts to reduce nuclear weapons, for fears that military force might be used by other countries for aggressive purposes is a root cause of the buildup of nuclear arsenals.

So let us end a fruitless debate regarding the causes of the ongoing conflicts in the world and simply look at the current situation. Such a look would show two very important facts, and they are that the Soviet Union is engaged in a war in another country and the United States is not. And furthermore, this war is one which is unlikely to bring any benefit to the Soviet Union. So why is it continued?

Certainly not because of the United States. Even if we wished we do not have the power to induce hundreds of thousands of people to take up arms against a well trained foreign army equipped with the most modern weapons. And neither we nor any country other than the Soviet Union has the power to stop that war. For who can tell the people of another country they should not fight for their motherland, for their independence and their national dignity?

Would the Russian people accept a foreign army in its midst? If confronted with such a situation they would fight with all they had -- and take help ^{from} any quarter -- as they proved so valiantly in World War II. The whole world knows that. So it is all the more difficult for those of us outside of the Soviet Union to understand why the Soviet political leadership does not seem to grasp the basic facts of that tragic situation.

I hope, as you say, that there is an open door to a just political settlement and a practical "working formula." But I have not seen either yet. Unfortunately, 1985 was marked by an intensification of conflict, with higher casualties on both sides. I can only hope that this is not what the future holds.

As I have said before, if you really want to withdraw from Afghanistan, you will have my cooperation in every reasonable way. We have no desire or intent to exploit the situation in Afghanistan to the detriment of Soviet interests. But it is clear that the fighting can be ended only by the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the return of Afghan refugees to their country, and the restoration of a genuinely sovereign, non-aligned state. The modalities used are of much less importance, so long as they lead to this result. Such a result would have an immediate positive effect on U.S.-Soviet relations and would greatly facilitate progress in many other areas.

The problem of halting superpower military involvement in local disputes, and thus a source of serious tension between our countries, is of course not limited to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan. And I must say candidly that some recent actions by your government are most discouraging. What are we to make of your military support of a local dictator who has declared a war of terrorism against much of the rest of the world, and against the United States in particular? How can one take Soviet declarations of opposition to terrorism seriously when confronted with such actions? And, more importantly, are we to conclude that the Soviet Union is so reckless in seeking to extend its influence in the world that it will place its prestige (and even the lives of some of its citizens) at the mercy of a mentally unbalanced local despot? If that turns out to be the case, then I honestly cannot be sanguine about the future of U.S.-Soviet relations.

You have made accusations about U.S. policy which I cannot accept. My purpose here, however, is not to debate, but to search for a way out of the pattern by which one of us becomes militarily involved, directly or indirectly, in local disputes, and thus stimulates the reaction of the other. This transforms what should be of local concern to a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. As I have said, we believe it is the Soviet Union which has acted without restraint in this respect. You say it is the United

States. It is unlikely that either of us will ever agree with the other on this point.

But agreement as to who is to blame is not necessary to find a solution. The point I would make is that we must find a way to terminate the military involvement, direct and indirect, of both our countries in these disputes, and avoid spreading such involvement to new areas. This was the goal of the proposal I made last October, and I consider it both fair and workable. Let us encourage the parties to these conflicts to begin negotiations to find political solutions, while our countries support the process by agreeing to terminate the flow of weapons and war materiel into the area.

Much of this letter deals with disagreements between us, because it is important to understand them if we are to overcome them. But I would not wish to leave the impression that I feel these are either insoluble or that there has been no progress in improving relations between our countries. On the contrary, I am convinced that the central problems can be solved if we approach them in the proper manner. And I am pleased that we gradually are finding some additional points on which we can agree.

But we do need to speed up the negotiation process and to make it more concrete and practical. Therefore, I would hope that your negotiators in Geneva will soon be in a position to respond in specific fashion to our November proposals, and that the "working formula" to solve the conflict in Afghanistan is in fact workable.

When you announced to the public the ideas contained in your letter of January 14, I made an announcement welcoming them. Our study of that message will shortly be completed and when it is I will be responding to the points you made in it.

Nancy joins me in sending our best regards to you and your wife.

Sincerely,

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~

February 3, 1986

ACTIONMEMORANDUM FOR RON LEHMAN
BOB LINHARD
STEVE SESTANOVICH

FROM: JACK MATLOCK

SUBJECT: Reply to Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter

I have tried my hand at drafting a reply to Gorbachev's handwritten letter. Although I believe that most of the materials are now in place to put an answer to the letter of January 14 together, I believe that an answer to the handwritten letter should precede it and should not try to address the specific questions raised in the January 14 letter.

My reasons are the following:

-- The exchange of handwritten letters may have started a process of direct informal personal communication which should be preserved. Thus there should be a specific answer to the long handwritten letter of December 24.

-- The letter of January 14 had an entirely different status. By going public, and also sending the same "proposals" to other chiefs of state, Gorbachev was clearly signalling that he did not intend this to be a confidential personal message to the President. It should, therefore be handled entirely separately, and the substance should be subject to consultations with the Allies.

-- Gorbachev's handwritten letter contains a number of allegations which need to be refuted lest the impression be left that we accept them, or feel at a disadvantage in finding contrary arguments.

-- The handwritten letter can be answered on its own terms, without getting into some of the issues which need to be addressed in the reply to the letter of January 14.

My suggested draft is at Tab I. It is longer than I would like, but I feel it is desirable for the President to answer in adequate detail the principal arguments Gorbachev advanced. It is slightly but not significantly longer than Gorbachev's letter.

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~
Declassify on: OADRDECLASSIFIED
NLRR P06-114/4 #8080
BY RW NARA DATE 3/9/11

In drafting it, I had the following considerations in mind:

-- I tried to reply directly to the observations and arguments Gorbachev made, to indicate that the President takes them seriously even if he rejects them.

-- I also tried to give considerable space to Afghanistan, Libya and regional conflict in general. This will build on what the President has said before and lay the groundwork for linking the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons to solution of these issues. The comments on Libya are designed both to put a marker down that they are playing with fire, and also to play on the danger to the Soviet Union of getting too close to an unstable character like Qaddhafi. (This latter point doubtless gives the Soviets real concern, and we should do what we can to heighten it.)

-- On the nuclear and SDI issues, I tried to answer Gorbachev's arguments without impinging in any way on the content of our response to his January "proposals." In particular, I think it important to let him know that his argument about SDI being part of a first-strike strategy is simply not going to fly in the light of Soviet activities, and in fact can be used against them if they persist. As you will note, I put in a plug for military-to-military contacts in the context of Gorbachev's allegations concerning disarming first-strike weapons in U.S. hands.

-- Regarding the NST negotiations, the draft makes abundantly clear that we do not consider our November proposals to be superceded by the Gorbachev January letter, but expect serious negotiation on them.

-- As for Gorbachev's January "proposals," I tried in various subtle but unmistakable ways to convey that the way they were presented did not promote a favorable negotiating climate. In deferring an answer to them and putting the answer in a more formal channel, the President would be implicitly telling Gorbachev that he knows much of the "Gorbachev initiative" was designed for propaganda and this makes it unsuitable for serious, totally private communication. At the same time, he does not knock the "proposals" directly. I believe this approach is more effective than direct criticism of Gorbachev's going public; complaints on the latter might convey the impression that we feel vulnerable. They also would leave us open to counter complaints that we are also guilty of leaking or announcing our proposals.

-- Regarding the Washington summit, I omitted any reference to it. Although Gorbachev had one reference to it in his letter (the line about the correspondence being "a very important channel in preparing" for it), he did not reciprocate the President's statement that he was looking forward to the meeting. Given the Soviet delay in setting a date it is probably best not to show too much eagerness, but rather to make clear that we are

not going to make substantive concessions just to get him here at the time we proposed.

-- Finally, on the way they address each other, I noted that the President tried to move to a less formal salutation in his own handwritten letter ("Dear General Secretary Gorbachev"), while Gorbachev did not pick this up, but continued to address the President as "Dear Mr. President." Though this is a trivial point, I believe that the President should follow Gorbachev's lead and revert to the "Dear Mr. General Secretary." Russians are so form-conscious they notice these little things and the fact that Gorbachev did not write back with a "Dear President Reagan" was doubtless deliberate.

REQUEST:

Please review as quickly as possible and get any suggestions to me on an EYES ONLY basis.

Adm. Poindexter has indicated to me that he wants to clear with Shultz and Weinberger after it has been written by the President. Therefore, no mention should be made of this draft except among the four of us (plus of course Don F. and John P.).

I will be doing a cover memo to the President incorporating most of the points above. If you have any suggestions, let me know.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~

February 4, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JM*

SUBJECT: Reply to Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter

A Memorandum to the President conveying the draft text of a reply to Gorbachev's handwritten letter to the President is at Tab I. The text of the draft has been slightly revised from the one you saw earlier, following consultation with Lehman, Linhard and Sestanovich.

(Lehman, Linhard and Sestanovich concur.) *JM*

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the Memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Approve Disapprove

Attachments:

Tab I Memorandum to the President

Tab A Draft Reply to Handwritten Letter from Gorbachev

Tab B Translation of Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter of December 24, 1985

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~
Declassify on: OADRDECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 28, 1997
By *OK* NARA, Date *7/2/02*

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NLS597-001 #117 SMF 10/22/99
BY CYS, NARA, Date 7/2/02

17

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN M. POINDEXTER

SUBJECT: Reply to Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter

Issue

Whether to reply to Gorbachev's handwritten letter of December 24, 1985

Facts

Gorbachev answered your handwritten letter with one of his own dated December 24, 1985. You have also received a more formal letter dated January 12 making proposals for a three-stage process for the elimination of nuclear weapons by 1999.

Discussion

The handwritten letter was obviously the more personal one, particularly since Gorbachev immediately announced the content of his letter of January 12 and wrote in the same vein to several other Chiefs of State. Therefore, it would be appropriate to answer the two letters separately, keeping the handwritten exchange more personal, private and direct. I think it is important to give a specific reply to the handwritten letter both to sustain this private exchange and to reply to some of the unacceptable allegations in it. This can be done without getting into the details of his letter of January 12.

The proposed draft at Tab A attempts to achieve the following:

-- It answers the principal arguments advanced by Gorbachev against SDI, implicitly reminding him that Soviet programs are such that his arguments can be turned against him, while still leaving the door open to concrete negotiation of legitimate issues.

-- By separating the reply to his handwritten letter from that to his "public" letter of January 12, the draft indicates clearly, without saying so, that the use of "proposals" for propoganda is not helpful to the negotiating process, and that such "proposals" will not be given the status of private messages.

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-- By devoting special attention to regional conflicts and Afghanistan in particular, it lays the ground for a linkage of restraint in these areas to the reduction of nuclear weapons beyond the initial 50 percent. It also includes a strong statement regarding Soviet involvement with Qaddafi, based on the danger posed to the Soviet Union by his unpredictability. (This is a factor the Soviets probably worry about, and it will not hurt to play on it a bit.)

You will note that the draft contains no mention of the Washington summit. Given the Soviet delay in suggesting a firm date -- or reacting in any way officially to our proposal made in early December -- I think it is desirable to avoid showing any exceptional eagerness. Also, in his letter, Gorbachev made no mention of the meeting other than to say that he considered the correspondence "a very important channel" for preparing for it.

One other small matter is that Gorbachev did not pick you up on your effort to develop a less formal salutation. (You had written "Dear General Secretary Gorbachev," while his reply was addressed "Dear Mr. President." You may, therefore, wish to revert to "Dear Mr. General Secretary.")

Although the draft reply is longer than I would like it to be, it is only slightly longer than Gorbachev's letter (a translation of which is at Tab B for your reference). Nevertheless, I consider it important to provide answers to Gorbachev's allegations in some detail, and this cannot be done much more briefly. Providing him with a detailed reply does indicate that you take his arguments seriously and have given them careful thought.

If you decide to write out a letter along the lines of the draft, I would recommend that we do a courtesy translation (on very close hold) and send it through Hartman in a sealed envelope, as we did with your previous handwritten letter.

Regarding the letter of January 12, we will be consulting the Allies over the next few days and should have a formal reply ready for you to consider at the end of next week.

Recommendation:

<u>OK</u>	<u>No</u>	
—	—	That you write a reply to Gorbachev along the lines of the draft at Tab A.

Attachments:

- Tab A Draft Reply to Handwritten Letter from Gorbachev
- Tab B Translation of Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter of December 24, 1985

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock

DRAFT REPLY TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Your letter of December 24, 1985, was most thought-provoking and I would like to share my reactions with you. I have of course also received your letter of January 14, 1986, and will be responding to it shortly. However, since the substance of the latter is already in the public domain, I believe it is well to keep our private communications separate. Some of the issues are of course the same, but I would hope that in this informal fashion we can continue our candid exchange on some of the fundamental issues facing us.

I agree with you that we need to set a specific agenda for discussion over the next few years, directed at a steady and -- I would hope -- radical improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. I suggested two such topics in my previous letter, and I would like to suggest now a broad three-part agenda which I believe would serve that purpose. That is, first, to find ways to reduce and eventually eliminate the use and threat of force in solving international disputes; second, to reach mutually acceptable agreements to reduce the level of arms, particularly those of mass destruction; and third, to take other steps which bolster confidence in dealing with each other and reduce distrust.

These are of course broad categories and they are also interrelated, for progress in one area makes it easier in the others. I also believe that history has shown that improvements in one area cannot long withstand an increase of tensions in the others. How many times in the past has an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations been reversed by actions which one or the other side considered fundamentally inconsistent with an improvement in relations? Unfortunately, this has occurred every time in the past when relations seemed to be on the road to improvement. The lesson, I believe, is clear: if we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past which doomed every trend toward improvement, we must take a broader view of the relationship than any single issue, however important it may be.

Without expecting to solve all issues at once, we must seek to solve problems in each of these three areas concurrently. It was with this in mind that I made my earlier suggestion regarding goals we might set before our next meeting. Finding a practical way to reduce our nuclear arsenals is certainly one of these key issues -- though by no means the only one. I am encouraged that we can agree that our ultimate goal is to eliminate nuclear weapons, and that we also agree that, as a first step, these arsenals should be cut by half. I also agree that we must make decisions not on the basis of assurances or intentions but with regard to the capabilities on both sides.

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BY RW NARA DATE 3/20/13

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Nevertheless, I do not understand the reasoning behind your conclusion that only a country preparing a disarming first strike would be interested in defenses against ballistic missiles. (By such reasoning, one could "prove" that all countries involved in World War II intended to use poison gas, because they issued gas masks to their troops.) Though it may be true that, in a world totally free of nuclear weapons, elaborate defenses against nuclear attack would not be necessary, we have not yet created such a world and we both recognize the difficult goal we have set. If such defenses prove feasible in the future, they could facilitate further reductions of nuclear weapons by creating a feeling of confidence that national security could be preserved without them. They could also provide insurance that no one could gain from reintroducing nuclear weapons once they were abolished.

Of course, as I have said before, I recognize that adding defensive systems to an arsenal replete with weapons with a disarming first-strike capability could under some conditions be destabilizing. However, without defenses, it could be even more difficult to preserve stability. That is why we are proposing that both sides concentrate first on reducing those weapons which can be used to deliver a disarming first strike. Certainly, if neither of our countries has forces suitable for a first strike, neither need fear that defenses against ballistic missiles would make a first strike strategy possible.

I also do not understand your statement that what you call "space strike weapons" are "all purpose" weapons. If that is the case, you must know something of weapon types and physical phenomena unknown to us. I have asked previously for concrete examples, and would still appreciate at least some concrete hint as to what you have in mind. As I understand it, the sort of directed-energy and kinetic devices both our countries are investigating in the context of ballistic missile defense are potentially most effective against point targets moving at high velocity in space. They would be ill-suited for mass destruction on earth, and if one were planning to strike earth targets from space, it does not seem rational to resort to such expensive and exotic techniques. Their destructiveness can never approach that of the nuclear weapons in our hands today. Nuclear weapons are the real problem.

Mr. General Secretary, in the spirit of candor which is essential to effective communication, I would add another point. You speak often of "space strike weapons," and your representatives have defined these as weapons which can strike targets in space from earth and its atmosphere, and weapons in space which can strike targets in space or on earth. I must ask, "What country has such weapons?" The answer is, only one: the Soviet Union. Your ABM system deployed around Moscow can strike targets beyond the atmosphere and has been tested in that mode. Your co-orbital

anti-satellite weapon is designed to destroy satellites. Furthermore, the Soviet Union began research in defenses utilizing directed energy before the United States did and seems well along in research (and -- incidentally -- some testing outside laboratories) of lasers and other forms of directed energy. The Soviet Union also has deployed extensive defenses which complement its ABM capability.

I do not point this out in reproach. But if we were to follow your logic to the effect that what you call "space strike weapons" would only be developed by a country planning a first strike, what would we think? We see the Soviet Union devoting enormous resources to defensive systems, in an effort which antedates by many years our own effort, and we see a Soviet Union which has built up its counterforce weapons in numbers far greater than our own. If the only reason to develop defensive weapons is to make a disarming first strike possible, then clearly we should be even more concerned than we have been.

We are concerned, and deeply so. But not because you are developing -- and unlike us deploying -- defensive weaponry. We are concerned over the fact that the Soviet Union for some reason has chosen to deploy a much larger number of weapons suitable for a disarming first strike than has the United States. There may be reasons for this other than actually seeking a first-strike advantage, but we too must look at capabilities rather than intentions. And the fact is that we are certain you have an advantage in this area.

Frankly, you have been misinformed if your specialists say that the missiles on our Trident submarines have a capability to destroy hardened missile silos -- a capability your SS-18 definitely has. Current Trident missiles lack the capability for such a role. They could be used only to retaliate. Nor is the Pershing II, which cannot even reach most Soviet strategic weapons, a potential first-strike weapon. Its short flight time is not substantially different from that of the more capable -- and much more numerous -- Soviet SS-20's aimed at our European Allies whom we are pledged to defend and most of whom have no nuclear capability of their own. Our forces currently have a very limited capability to strike Soviet silos, and we are improving this capability only because we cannot accept a situation in which the Soviet Union holds such a clear advantage in counterforce weaponry. Even if we unfortunately are required to complete all these planned deployments in the absence of a strategic arms accord which limits them, they will not match Soviet weapons with a first-strike capability.

If our defense and military specialists disagree regarding the capability of the weapons on the other side, then by all means let us arrange for them to meet and discuss their respective concerns. They don't have to exchange blueprints or divulge

technical secrets, but a frank discussion of their respective assessments and the reasons for them could perhaps clear up those misunderstandings which are not based on fact.

In any event, we have both agreed to the principle of a 50% reduction of nuclear arms. Implementing that agreement is surely the first task of our negotiators at Geneva. We remain willing to reduce those weapons systems which the Soviet Union finds threatening so long as the Soviet Union will reduce those which pose a special threat to the United States and its Allies. Our proposals in November included significant movement on our part in this direction and were a major step to accommodate your concerns. I hope that your negotiators will be empowered to discuss them thoroughly during the current round.

So far as defensive systems are concerned, I would reiterate what I wrote before: if your concern is that such systems may be used to permit a first-strike strategy, or as a cover for basing weapons of mass destruction in space, then there must be practical ways to prevent such possibilities. Of course, I have in mind not general assurances but concrete, verifiable means which both sides can rely on to avoid these contingencies, neither of which is a part of United States strategy or planning. In addition, we remain committed to discuss the relationship of offensive and defensive systems, and practical ways to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons and move to a safer world.

Regarding regional conflicts, I can see that our respective analyses of the causes are totally incompatible. There seems little point in continuing to debate those matters on which we are bound to disagree. The important question is where we go from here: how we act to reduce the level of violence in the world, particularly in those places where our own forces are involved. This is not a trivial issue. It is also not unrelated to our efforts to reduce nuclear weapons, for fears that military force might be used by other countries for aggressive purposes is a root cause of the buildup of nuclear arsenals.

So let us end a fruitless debate regarding the causes of the ongoing conflicts in the world and simply look at the current situation. Such a look would show two very important facts, and they are that the Soviet Union is engaged in a war in another country and the United States is not. And furthermore, this war is one which is unlikely to bring any benefit to the Soviet Union. So why is it continued?

Certainly not because of the United States. Even if we wished we do not have the power to induce hundreds of thousands of people to take up arms against a well trained foreign army equipped with the most modern weapons. And neither we nor any country other than the Soviet Union has the power to stop that war. For who can tell the people of another country they should not fight for

their motherland, for their independence and their national dignity?

Would the Russian people accept a foreign army in its midst? If confronted with such a situation they would fight with all they had -- and take help from any quarter -- as they proved so valiantly in World War II. The whole world knows that. So it is all the more difficult for those of us outside of the Soviet Union to understand why the Soviet political leadership does not seem to grasp the basic facts of that tragic situation.

I hope, as you say, that there is an open door to a just political settlement and a practical "working formula." But I have not seen either yet. Unfortunately, 1985 was marked by an intensification of conflict, with higher casualties on both sides. I can only hope that this is not what the future holds.

As I have said before, if you really want to withdraw from Afghanistan, you will have my cooperation in every reasonable way. We have no desire or intent to exploit the situation in Afghanistan to the detriment of Soviet interests. But it is clear that the fighting can be ended only by the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the return of Afghan refugees to their country, and the restoration of a genuinely sovereign, non-aligned state. The modalities used are of much less importance, so long as they lead to this result. Such a result would have an immediate positive effect on U.S.-Soviet relations and would help clear the way to progress in many other areas.

The problem of halting superpower military involvement in local disputes, and thus a source of serious tension between our countries, is of course not limited to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan. And I must say candidly that some recent actions by your government are most discouraging. What are we to make of your sharply increased military support of a local dictator who has declared a war of terrorism against much of the rest of the world, and against the United States in particular? How can one take Soviet declarations of opposition to terrorism seriously when confronted with such actions? And, more importantly, are we to conclude that the Soviet Union is so reckless in seeking to extend its influence in the world that it will place its prestige (and even the lives of some of its citizens) at the mercy of a mentally unbalanced local despot? If that turns out to be the case, then I honestly cannot be sanguine about the future of U.S.-Soviet relations.

You have made accusations about U.S. policy which I cannot accept. My purpose here, however, is not to debate, but to search for a way out of the pattern by which one of us becomes militarily involved, directly or indirectly, in local disputes, and thus stimulates the reaction of the other. This transforms what should be of local concern into a U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

As I have said, we believe it is the Soviet Union which has acted without restraint in this respect. You say it is the United States. It is unlikely that either of us will ever agree with the other on this point.

But agreement as to who is to blame is not necessary to find a solution. The point I would make is that we must find a way to terminate the military involvement, direct and indirect, of both our countries in these disputes, and avoid spreading such involvement to new areas. This was the goal of the proposal I made last October, and I consider it both fair and workable. Let us encourage the parties to these conflicts to begin negotiations to find political solutions, while our countries support the process by agreeing to terminate the flow of weapons and war materiel into the area of conflict.

Much of this letter deals with disagreements between us, because it is important to understand them if we are to overcome them. But I would not wish to leave the impression that I feel these are either insoluble or that there has been no progress in improving relations between our countries. On the contrary, I am convinced that the central problems can be solved if we approach them in the proper manner. And I am pleased that we gradually are finding some additional points on which we can agree.

But we do need to speed up the negotiation process and to make it more concrete and practical. Therefore, I would hope that your negotiators in Geneva will soon be in a position to respond in specific fashion to our November proposals, and that the "working formula" to solve the conflict in Afghanistan is in fact workable.

When you announced to the public the ideas contained in your letter of January 14, I made an announcement welcoming them. Our study of that message will shortly be completed and when it is I will be responding to the points you made in it.

Nancy joins me in sending our best regards to you and your wife.

Sincerely,

Authority NCSS97-001 #118 8776 DECLASSIFIED / 2E/CASED 10/22/97
BY Cds, NARA, Date 7/2/82

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF LANGUAGE SERVICES

(TRANSLATION)

LS NO. 118545
DZ/GT/WH/LB
Russian

His Excellency
Ronald W. Reagan
President of the United States
Washington, D.C.
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

I consider your letter important and also value the form you used in writing to me.

I say this to you because I see the desire to continue and to strengthen what we achieved in Geneva. I am glad that we began there -- both in substance and in spirit -- a direct and frank discussion. I attach special significance to the fact that we have been able to overcome the serious psychological barrier which for a long time has hindered a dialogue worthy of the leaders of the USSR and USA.

I have the feeling that now you and I can set formalities aside and can get down to the heart of the matter -- establishing a specific topical agenda for discussion over the next few years on the basis of our understanding, and straightening out Soviet-American relations. I visualize this task very concretely: we have to broaden areas of agreement, strengthen the elements of responsibility in our policy, and make the appropriate practical decisions. In my opinion the ideal situation would be one in which you and I would give impetus to a constant forward movement. I agree with what you said: in the final analysis no one besides us can do this.

The first thing we should do is to take upon ourselves the task of undoing the knot which has been tied around the issues of nuclear and space weapons. I was encouraged by the fact that you, Mr. President, also consider that this is of key significance.

I think you understood from what I told you in Geneva that our decisive opposition to the development of space-strike weapons is dictated by the fact that weapons of this class which, due to their specific nature, possess the capability of being used both for defensive and offensive aims, represent in the final analysis an extremely dangerous build-up of offensive potential, with all the consequences inevitably ensuing therefrom from the point of view of further escalating the arms race.

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You say, Mr. President, that the U.S. has no intention of using the SDI program to obtain military superiority.

I do not doubt that you personally may really have no such intentions. But you must agree that the leadership of one side has to evaluate the actions of the other in the area of developing new types of weapons, not in accordance with intentions, but in accordance with the potential capabilities which may be attained as a result of the development of these weapons.

Examining the SDI program from this perspective, the Soviet leadership comes to the same conclusion every time: given the realities of the current situation, only a country which is preparing for a first (disarming) strike needs a "space shield"; a country which does not base its actions on such a concept should have no need for such a weapons system.

After all, space-strike weapons are all-purpose weapons. The space-strike weapons that are being created in the U.S. are kinetic energy weapons and also long-range, directed energy systems (with a range of several thousand miles and great destructive power). As our experts and scientists and yours confirm, those weapons are capable of destroying in space, as well as from space, within a very short time, in great quantities and selectively, objects which are thousands of miles away. I stress -- thousands of miles away.

For example, how should we regard the space weapons of a country which have the capability of destroying another country's centers for controlling space objects and of destroying its space devices for monitoring, navigation, communication etc. within very short time intervals measured in minutes? Essentially, these weapons can only be intended for "blinding" the other side, catching it unprepared and depriving it of the possibility of countering a nuclear strike. Moreover, if these weapons are developed, the process of perfecting them and giving them even better combat characteristics will begin immediately. Such is the course of development of all weaponry.

How then, Mr. President, should the Soviet Union act in such a situation? I would like to repeat what I already told you in Geneva. The USSR cannot simply reduce and will not reduce nuclear weapons to the detriment of its security, when the SDI program is being implemented in the U.S. Whether we like it or not, we will be forced to develop and improve our strategic nuclear forces and increase their capability of neutralizing the U.S. "space shield." At the same time, we would also have to develop our own space weapons inter alia for the purpose of

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a territorial ABM defense. Probably, the U.S. would in turn then take some other additional steps. As a result, we will not get out of the vicious cycle of measures and countermeasures, out of the whirlpool of an ever-increasing arms race. The consequence of such competition for our peoples and for all of mankind is unpredictable.

I am convinced that the only sensible way out is not to engage in this at all. From every point of view the correct path for our countries is negotiation on the prevention of an arms race in space and its cessation on earth. And we need to come to agreement on the basis of equal and mutually acceptable conditions.

You and I agreed to accelerate the negotiations. I took satisfaction in hearing you say that the U.S. would not "develop space-based offensive weapons."

As I see it, some kind of common basis is emerging between you and me for a very significant part of the problem of preventing an arms race in space. Let us have our representatives at the negotiations proceed on this basis to begin working out specific measures to prevent the development of offensive space weapons, i.e., all space-based weapons which can destroy targets in space and from space.

In the spirit of the frankness in which we are talking, I would like to say that this issue has now become very acute: either events will determine policy or we will determine policy. In order not to be governed by events, it is especially important once again to conduct a profound analysis of all aspects of the objective interrelationship between offensive and defensive weapons and to hear each other out on this issue. However, it seems to me that there will be little meaning to such discussions if in tandem with them weapons of war start coming out of the doors of our laboratories, weapons whose influence on strategic stability we must not now miscalculate. Common sense dictates that until we determine together those consequences, we must not permit anything to go beyond the walls of the laboratory. We are prepared to negotiate to reach agreement on this matter as well.

It appears to me this is a practical way to implement the joint accord you and I confirmed in Geneva concerning the inadmissibility of an arms race in space and concerning the ultimate elimination of nuclear arms.

In line with such an approach it would also make sense at the Geneva negotiations to discuss the issue of eliminating the danger of a first (disarming) nuclear strike. I would like to

state to you again very definitely: we are not making a bid for a first nuclear strike, we are not preparing our nuclear forces for one.

I cannot agree with the way you formulate the issue of first strike nuclear forces. This issue, of course, is not merely one of ICBM warheads. For example, there is no difference between U.S. ballistic missile warheads on "Trident" submarines and warheads on modern Soviet land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles as far as their kill capability is concerned, i.e. in terms of such indices as accuracy, power and range. And if one considers this issue from the point of view of warning time, then, for a significant portion of submarine missiles, where the U.S. has a three-fold advantage in warheads, the warning time is significantly shorter.

And can we view the "Pershing II" missiles deployed in Europe with their high accuracy and short flight time to targets on USSR territory as anything other than first-strike weapons?

Please forgive me for dealing with technical details in a personal letter like this. But these are vitally important realities, and we simply cannot get around them.

Believe me, Mr. President, we have a genuine and truly serious concern about U.S. nuclear systems. You talk about mutual concerns. This matter can be resolved only through considering and counting the sum total of the respective nuclear systems of both countries. Let our delegations discuss this matter as well.

Mr. President, I would like to give you my brief reaction to what you said concerning regional conflicts. At the time when we touched on these issues in Geneva, I stressed that it is most important to view things realistically, to see the world as it is. If we recognize the fact that independent states exist and function in the international arena, then we also have to acknowledge their sovereign right to have relations with whomever they wish and the right to ask for assistance, including military assistance.

Both you and we offer such assistance. Why apply a double standard and assert that Soviet assistance is a source of tension and U.S. assistance is beneficial? It would be better for us to be guided by objective criteria in this matter. The Soviet Union is assisting legitimate governments which come to us because they have been and are being subjected to outside military interference.

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And, as the facts indicate, the U.S. incites actions against governments and supports and supplies weapons to groups which are inimical to society and which are, in essence, terrorists. Looking at things objectively, it is such actions and outside interference that create regional tension and conflict. If such actions cease, I am convinced tensions will decrease and the prospects for political settlements will become much better and more realistic.

Unfortunately, at present, developments are proceeding in a different direction. Take, for example, the unprecedented pressure and threats which the government of Nicaragua is being subjected to - a legitimate government brought to power through free elections.

I will be frank: what the United States has done recently causes concern. It seems that there is a tilt in the direction of further exacerbation of regional problems. Such an approach does not make it easier to find a common language and makes the search for political solutions more difficult.

With regard to Afghanistan, one gets the impression that the U.S. side intentionally fails to notice the "open door" leading to a political settlement. Now there is even a working formula for such a settlement. It is important not to hinder the negotiations in progress, but to help them along. In that event a fair settlement will definitely be found.

Mr. President, I would like to have you take my letter as another one of our "fireside talks." I would truly like to preserve not only the spirit of our Geneva meetings, but also to go further in developing our dialogue. I view our correspondence as a very important channel for preparing for our meeting in Washington.

The new year will be upon us very soon, and I would like to send you and your wife our very best wishes.

Sincerely,

M. Gorbachev

Moscow, December 24, 1985

DRAFT REPLY TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Your letter of December 24, 1985, was most thought-provoking and I would like to share my reactions with you. I have of course also received your letter of January 14, 1986, and will be responding to it shortly. However, since the substance of the latter is already in the public domain, I believe it is well to keep our private communications separate. Some of the issues are of course the same, but I would hope that in this informal fashion we can continue our candid exchange on some of the fundamental issues facing us.

I agree with you that we need to set a specific agenda for discussion over the next few years, directed at a steady and -- I would hope -- radical improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. I suggested two such topics in my previous letter, and I would like to suggest now a broad three-part agenda which I believe would serve that purpose. That is, first, to find ways to reduce and eventually eliminate the use and threat of force in solving international disputes; second, to reach mutually acceptable agreements to reduce the level of arms, particularly those of mass destruction; and third, to take other steps which bolster confidence in dealing with each other and reduce distrust.

These are of course broad categories and they are also interrelated, for progress in one area makes it easier in the others. I also believe that history has shown that improvements in one area cannot long withstand an increase of tensions in the others. How many times in the past has an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations been reversed by actions which one or the other side considered fundamentally inconsistent with an improvement in relations? Unfortunately, this has occurred every time in the past when relations seemed to be on the road to improvement. The lesson, I believe, is clear: if we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past which doomed every trend toward improvement, we must take a broader view of the relationship than any single issue, however important it may be.

Without expecting to solve all issues at once, we must seek to solve problems in each of these three areas concurrently. It was with this in mind that I made my earlier suggestion regarding goals we might set before our next meeting. Finding a practical way to reduce our nuclear arsenals is certainly one of these key issues -- though by no means the only one. I am encouraged that we can agree that our ultimate goal is to eliminate nuclear weapons, and that we also agree that, as a first step, these arsenals should be cut by half. I also agree that we must make decisions not on the basis of assurances or intentions but with regard to the capabilities on both sides.

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BY RW NARA DATE 3/9/11

Nevertheless, I do not understand the reasoning behind your conclusion that only a country preparing a disarming first strike would be interested in defenses against ballistic missiles. (By such reasoning, one could "prove" that all countries involved in World War II intended to use poison gas, because they issued gas masks to their troops.) Though it may be true that, in a world totally free of nuclear weapons, elaborate defenses against nuclear attack would not be necessary, we have not yet created such a world and we both recognize the difficult task we have set for ourselves in moving in that direction. Should such defenses prove feasible in the future, they could facilitate further reductions of nuclear weapons by creating a feeling of confidence that national security could be preserved without them.

Of course, as I have said before, I recognize that adding defensive systems to an arsenal replete with weapons with a disarming first-strike capability could indeed be destabilizing. But this is not what we are proposing, and in fact it is why we are proposing that both sides concentrate first on reducing those weapons which can be used to deliver a disarming first strike. If neither of our countries have weapons suitable for a first strike, why should either fear that defenses against ballistic missiles would make a first strike strategy possible?

I also do not understand your statement that what you call "space strike weapons" are "all purpose" weapons. If that is the case, you must know something of weapon types and physical phenomena unknown to us. I have asked previously for concrete examples, and would still appreciate at least some concrete hint as to what you have in mind. As I understand it, the sort of directed-energy and kinetic devices both our countries are investigating in the context of ballistic missile defense are potentially most effective against point targets moving at high velocity in space. They do not have the capability of mass destruction on earth, and if one were planning to strike earth targets from space, it does not seem rational to resort to such expensive and exotic techniques. Their destructiveness can never approach that of the nuclear weapons in our hands today. Nuclear weapons are the real problem.

Mr. General Secretary, in the spirit of candor which is essential to effective communication, I would add another point. You speak often of "space strike weapons," and your representatives have defined these as weapons which can strike targets in space from earth and its atmosphere, and weapons in space which can strike targets in space or on earth. I must ask, "What country has such weapons?" The answer is, only one: the Soviet Union. Your ABM system deployed around Moscow can strike targets beyond the atmosphere and has been tested in that mode. Your co-orbital anti-satellite weapon is designed to destroy satellites. And our specialists consider it most likely that the new missile we call the SA-X-12 also is capable of destroying targets above the

atmosphere. Furthermore, the Soviet Union began research in defenses utilizing directed energy before the United States did and seems well along in research (and -- incidentally -- some testing outside laboratories) of lasers and other forms of directed energy.

I do not point this out in reproach. In our opinion, none of these things as yet violates any agreement between our countries. But if we were to follow your logic to the effect that what you call "space strike weapons" would only be developed by a country planning a first strike, what would we think? We see the Soviet Union devoting enormous resources to defensive systems, in an effort which antedates by many years our own effort, and we see a Soviet Union which has built up its counterforce weapons in numbers far greater than our own. If the only reason to develop defensive weapons is to make a disarming first strike possible, then clearly we should be even more concerned than we have been.

We are concerned, and deeply so. But not because you are developing -- and unlike us deploying -- defensive weaponry. We are concerned over the fact that the Soviet Union for some reason has chosen to deploy a much larger number of weapons suitable for a disarming first strike than has the United States. There may be reasons for this other than actually seeking a first-strike advantage, but we too must look at capabilities rather than intentions. And the fact is that we are certain you have such an advantage in this area.

Frankly, you have been misinformed if your specialists say that the missiles on our Trident submarines have a capability to destroy hardened missile silos -- a capability your SS-18 definitely has. Current Trident missiles lack the accuracy for such a role. They could be used only to retaliate. Nor is the Pershing II, which cannot even reach most Soviet strategic weapons, a potential first-strike weapon. Its short flight time is not substantially different from that of the more capable -- and much more numerous -- Soviet SS-20's aimed at our European Allies whom we are pledged to defend and most of whom have no nuclear capability of their own. We are just beginning to deploy missiles with a capability to strike Soviet silos, and we are doing so only because we cannot accept a situation in which the Soviet Union holds such a clear advantage in first-strike weaponry. Even if we unfortunately are required to complete all these planned deployments in the absence of a strategic arms accord which limits them, they will not match the number of Soviet weapons with a first-strike capability.

If our military specialists disagree regarding the capability of the weapons on the other side, then by all means let us arrange for them to meet and discuss their respective concerns. They don't have to exchange blueprints or divulge technical secrets, but a frank discussion of their respective assessments and the

reasons for them could perhaps clear up those misunderstandings which are not based on fact.

In any event, I agree with you that we must move to stop this cycle of action (or perceived action) and reaction. That is surely the first task of our negotiators at Geneva. Our position remains that we are willing to reduce those strategic weapons systems which the Soviet Union finds threatening so long as the Soviet Union will reduce those which pose a special threat to the United States. Our proposals in November represented a major step to accommodate your concerns and I hope that your negotiators will be empowered to discuss them thoroughly during the current round.

So far as defensive systems are concerned, I would reiterate what I wrote before: if your concern is that such systems may be used to permit a first-strike strategy, or as a cover for basing weapons of mass destruction in space, then there must be practical ways our negotiators can find to prevent such possibilities. I invite you to have your negotiators join ours in a practical discussion of these matters. Of course, I have in mind not general assurances but concrete, verifiable means which both sides can rely on to avoid these contingencies, neither of which is a part of United States strategy or planning.

Regarding regional conflicts, I can see that our respective analyses of the causes are totally incompatible. There seems little point in continuing to debate those matters on which we are bound to disagree. The important question is where we go from here; how we act to reduce the level of violence in the world, particularly in those places where our own forces are involved. This is not a trivial issue. It is also not unrelated to our efforts to reduce nuclear weapons, for fears that military force might be used by other countries for aggressive purposes is a root cause of the buildup of nuclear arsenals.

So let us end a fruitless debate regarding the causes of the ongoing conflicts in the world and simply look at the current situation. Such a look would show two very important facts, and they are that the Soviet Union is engaged in a war in another country and the United States is not. And furthermore, this war is one which is unlikely to bring any benefit to the Soviet Union. So why is it continued?

Certainly not because of the United States. Even if we wished we do not have the power to induce hundreds of thousands of people to take up arms against a well trained foreign army equipped with the most modern weapons. And neither we nor any country other than the Soviet Union has the power to stop that war. For who can tell the people of another country they should not fight for their motherland, for their independence and their national dignity?

Would the Russian people accept a foreign army in its midst? If confronted with such a situation they would fight with all they had -- and take help ^{from} any quarter -- as they proved so valiantly in World War II. The whole world knows that. So it is all the more difficult for those of us outside of the Soviet Union to understand why the Soviet political leadership does not seem to grasp the basic facts of that tragic situation.

I hope, as you say, that there is an open door to a just political settlement and a practical "working formula." But I have not seen either yet. Unfortunately, 1985 was marked by an intensification of conflict, with higher casualties on both sides. I can only hope that this is not what the future holds.

As I have said before, if you really want to withdraw from Afghanistan, you will have my cooperation in every reasonable way. We have no desire or intent to exploit the situation in Afghanistan to the detriment of Soviet interests. But it is clear that the fighting can be ended only by the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the return of Afghan refugees to their country, and the restoration of a genuinely sovereign, non-aligned state. The modalities used are of much less importance, so long as they lead to this result. Such a result would have an immediate positive effect on U.S.-Soviet relations and would greatly facilitate progress in many other areas.

sharply increased

The problem of halting superpower military involvement in local disputes, and thus a source of serious tension between our countries, is of course not limited to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan. And I must say candidly that some recent actions by your government are most discouraging. What are we to make of your military support of a local dictator who has declared a war of terrorism against much of the rest of the world, and against the United States in particular? How can one take Soviet declarations of opposition to terrorism seriously when confronted with such actions? And, more importantly, are we to conclude that the Soviet Union is so reckless in seeking to extend its influence in the world that it will place its prestige (and even the lives of some of its citizens) at the mercy of a mentally unbalanced local despot? If that turns out to be the case, then I honestly cannot be sanguine about the future of U.S.-Soviet relations.

You have made accusations about U.S. policy which I cannot accept. My purpose here, however, is not to debate, but to search for a way out of the pattern by which one of us becomes militarily involved, directly or indirectly, in local disputes, and thus stimulates the reaction of the other. This transforms what should be of local concern to a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. As I have said, we believe it is the Soviet Union which has acted without restraint in this respect. You say it is the United

States. It is unlikely that either of us will ever agree with the other on this point.

But agreement as to who is to blame is not necessary to find a solution. The point I would make is that we must find a way to terminate the military involvement, direct and indirect, of both our countries in these disputes, and avoid spreading such involvement to new areas. This was the goal of the proposal I made last October, and I consider it both fair and workable. Let us encourage the parties to these conflicts to begin negotiations to find political solutions, while our countries support the process by agreeing to terminate the flow of weapons and war materiel into the area.

of conflict

Much of this letter deals with disagreements between us, because it is important to understand them if we are to overcome them. But I would not wish to leave the impression that I feel these are either insoluble or that there has been no progress in improving relations between our countries. On the contrary, I am convinced that the central problems can be solved if we approach them in the proper manner. And I am pleased that we gradually are finding some additional points on which we can agree.

But we do need to speed up the negotiation process and to make it more concrete and practical. Therefore, I would hope that your negotiators in Geneva will soon be in a position to respond in specific fashion to our November proposals, and that the "working formula" to solve the conflict in Afghanistan is in fact workable.

When you announced to the public the ideas contained in your letter of January 14, I made an announcement welcoming them. Our study of that message will shortly be completed and when it is I will be responding to the points you made in it.

Nancy joins me in sending our best regards to you and your wife.

Sincerely,

DRAFT REPLY TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Your letter of December 24, 1985, was most thought-provoking and I would like to share my reactions with you. I have of course also received your letter of January 14, 1986, and will be responding to it shortly. However, since the substance of the letter is already in the public domain, I believe it is well to keep our private communications separate. Some of the issues are of course the same, but I would hope that in this informal fashion we can continue our candid exchange on some of the fundamental issues facing us.

I agree with you that we need to set a specific agenda for discussion over the next few years, directed at a steady and -- I would hope -- radical improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. I suggested two such topics in my previous letter, and I would like to suggest now a broad three-part agenda which I believe would serve that purpose. That is, first, to find ways to reduce and eventually eliminate the use and threat of force in solving international disputes; second, to reach mutually acceptable agreements to reduce the level of arms, particularly those of mass destruction; and third, to take other steps which bolster confidence in dealing with each other and reduce distrust.

These are of course broad categories and they are also interrelated, for progress in one area makes it easier in the others. I also believe that history has shown that improvements in one area cannot long withstand an increase of tensions in the others. How many times in the past has an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations been reversed by actions which one or the other side considered fundamentally inconsistent with an improvement in relations? Unfortunately, this has occurred every time in the past when relations seemed to be on the road to improvement. The lesson, I believe, is clear: if we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past which doomed every trend toward improvement, we must take a broader view of the relationship than any single issue, however important it may be.

Without expecting to solve all issues at once, we must seek to solve problems in each of these three areas concurrently. It was with this in mind that I made my earlier suggestion regarding goals we might set before our next meeting. Finding a practical way to reduce our nuclear arsenals is certainly one of these key issues -- though by no means the only one. I am encouraged that we can agree that our ultimate goal is to eliminate nuclear weapons, and that we also agree that, as a first step, these arsenals should be cut by half. I also agree that we must make decisions not on the basis of assurances or intentions but with regard to the capabilities on both sides.

DECLASSIFIED

NLRR F06-1144 #8083
BY RW NARA DATE 3/9/11

Nevertheless, I do not understand the reasoning behind your conclusion that only a country preparing a disarming first strike would be interested in defenses against ballistic missiles. (By such reasoning, one could "prove" that all countries involved in World War II intended to use poison gas, because they issued gas masks to their troops.) Though it may be true that, in a world totally free of nuclear weapons, elaborate defenses against nuclear attack would not be necessary, we have not yet created such a world and we both recognize the difficult task we have set for ourselves in moving in that direction. Should such defenses prove feasible in the future, they could facilitate further reductions of nuclear weapons by creating a feeling of confidence that national security could be preserved without them.

AND EVEN THEN, GIVEN THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS DO EXIST NOW, AS DOES THE KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD SUCH WEAPONS, DEFENSES MAY BE ESSENTIAL INSUREANCE THAT NONE WILL EVER BE REINTRODUCED

38

JACK - want to avoid giving impression that p number obviates the need for still.

Of course, as I have said before, I recognize that adding defensive systems to an arsenal replete with weapons with a disarming first-strike capability could indeed be destabilizing. But this is not what we are proposing, and in fact it is why we are proposing that both sides concentrate first on reducing those weapons which can be used to deliver a disarming first strike. If neither of our countries have ^{FORCES} weapons suitable for a first strike, why should either fear that defenses against ballistic missiles would make a first strike strategy possible?

UNDER SOME CONDITIONS

INDEED, WITHOUT DEFENSES, WE ARE FACED WITH THAT DANGER OF A GREATER DEGREE. THAT

I also do not understand your statement that what you call "space strike weapons" are "all purpose" weapons. If that is the case, you must know something of weapon types and physical phenomena unknown to us. I have asked previously for concrete examples, and would still appreciate at least some concrete hint as to what you have in mind. As I understand it, the sort of directed-energy and kinetic devices both our countries are investigating in the context of ballistic missile defense are potentially most effective against point targets moving at high velocity in space. They do not have the capability of mass destruction on earth, and if one were planning to strike earth targets from space, it does not seem rational to resort to such expensive and exotic techniques. Their destructiveness can never approach that of the nuclear weapons in our hands today. Nuclear weapons are the real problem.

JACK - need to watch estrogue statements about capability

WOULD BE SUITED FOR

CERTAINLY, IF

Mr. General Secretary, in the spirit of candor which is essential to effective communication, I would add another point. You speak often of "space strike weapons," and your representatives have defined these as weapons which can strike targets in space from earth and its atmosphere, and weapons in space which can strike targets in space or on earth. I must ask, "What country has such weapons?" The answer is, only one: the Soviet Union. Your ABM system deployed around Moscow can strike targets beyond the atmosphere and has been tested in that mode. Your co-orbital anti-satellite weapon is designed to destroy satellites. ~~And our specialists consider it most likely that the new missile we call the SA-X-12 also is capable of destroying targets above the~~

THE DANGER OF A GREATER DEGREE OF UNSTABILITY TO A

JACK - would drop SA-X-12. It is not an "EXOATMOSPHERIC INTERCEPTOR" - therefore not for use against things in space

ballistic

AND, THE SOVIET UNION ALSO HAS EXTENSIVE DEFENSES ALREADY DEPLOYED WHICH COULD COMPLEMENT ABM CAPABILITY.

39

atmosphere. Furthermore, the Soviet Union began research in defenses utilizing directed energy before the United States did and seems well along in research (and -- incidentally -- some testing outside laboratories) of lasers and other forms of directed energy.

THIS YOUR STEADY RESEARCH EFFORT

I do not point ~~this~~ out in reproach. ~~In our opinion, none of these things as yet violates any agreement between our countries.~~ But if we were to follow your logic to the effect that what you call "space strike weapons" would only be developed by a country planning a first strike, what would we think? We see the Soviet Union devoting enormous resources to defensive systems, in an effort which antedates by many years our own effort, and we see a Soviet Union which has built up its counterforce weapons in numbers far greater than our own. If the only reason to develop defensive weapons is to make a disarming first strike possible, then clearly we should be even more concerned than we have been.

?

We are concerned, and deeply so. But not because you are developing -- and unlike us deploying -- defensive weaponry. We are concerned over the fact that the Soviet Union for some reason has chosen to deploy a much larger number of weapons suitable for a disarming first strike than has the United States. There may be reasons for this other than actually seeking a first-strike advantage, but we too must look at capabilities rather than intentions. And the fact is that we are certain you have such an advantage in this area.

Frankly, you have been misinformed if your specialists say that the missiles on our Trident submarines have a capability to destroy hardened missile silos -- a capability your SS-18 definitely has. Current Trident missiles lack the ~~accuracy~~ for such a role. They could be used only to retaliate. Nor is the Pershing II, which cannot even reach most Soviet strategic weapons, a potential first-strike weapon. Its short flight time is not substantially different from that of the more capable -- and much more numerous -- Soviet SS-20's aimed at our European Allies whom we are pledged to defend and most of whom have no nuclear capability of their own. ~~We are just beginning to deploy missiles with a capability to strike Soviet silos, and we are doing so only because we cannot accept a situation in which the Soviet Union holds such a clear advantage in first-strike weaponry. Even if we unfortunately are required to complete all these planned deployments in the absence of a strategic arms accord which limits them, they will not match the number of Soviet weapons with a first-strike capability.~~

CAPABILITY

COUNTER-MILITARY

Our forces currently have a very limited capability

Improving this capability

DEFENSE ARM

If our military specialists disagree regarding the capability of the weapons on the other side, then by all means let us arrange for them to meet and discuss their respective concerns. They don't have to exchange blueprints or divulge technical secrets, but a frank discussion of their respective assessments and the

no to good idea

reasons for them could perhaps clear up those misunderstandings which are not based on fact.

In any event, ~~I~~ agree with you that we must move to ~~stop this cycle of action (or perceived action) and reaction.~~ That is surely the first task of our negotiators at Geneva. Our position remains that we are willing to reduce those ~~strategic~~ weapons systems which the Soviet Union finds threatening so long as the Soviet Union will reduce those which pose a special threat to the United States. ~~Our proposals in November, represented a major step to accommodate your concerns, and I hope that your negotiators will be empowered to discuss them thoroughly during the current round.~~

THIS THE AREA OF EXISTING FORCES

AND OUR ALLIES

INCLUDED SIGNIFICANT, SERIOUS MOVEMENT ON OUR PART IN THIS DIRECTION AND

[So far as defensive systems are concerned, I would reiterate what I wrote before: if your concern is that such systems may be used to permit a first-strike strategy, or as a cover for basing weapons of mass destruction in space, then there must be practical ways ~~our negotiators can find~~ to prevent such possibilities. ~~I invite you to have your negotiators join ours in a practical discussion of these matters.~~ Of course, I have in mind not general assurances but concrete, verifiable means which both sides can rely on to avoid these contingencies, neither of which is a part of United States strategy or planning.]

Regarding regional conflicts, I can see that our respective analyses of the causes are totally incompatible. There seems little point in continuing to debate those matters on which we are bound to disagree. The important question is where we go from here; how we act to reduce the level of violence in the world, particularly in those places where our own forces are involved. This is not a trivial issue. It is also not unrelated to our efforts to reduce nuclear weapons, for fears that military force might be used by other countries for aggressive purposes is a root cause of the buildup of nuclear arsenals.

So let us end a fruitless debate regarding the causes of the ongoing conflicts in the world and simply look at the current situation. Such a look would show two very important facts, and they are that the Soviet Union is engaged in a war in another country and the United States is not. And furthermore, this war is one which is unlikely to bring any benefit to the Soviet Union. So why is it continued?

Certainly not because of the United States. Even if we wished we do not have the power to induce hundreds of thousands of people to take up arms against a well trained foreign army equipped with the most modern weapons. And neither we nor any country other than the Soviet Union has the power to stop that war. For who can tell the people of another country they should not fight for their motherland, for their independence and their national dignity?

IN ADDITION, WE REMAIN PREPARED AND COMMITTED TO DISCUSS THE RELATIONSHIP OF OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS, AND PRACTICAL WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN REDUCE THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MOVE TO A SAFER WORLD.

Would the Russian people accept a foreign army in its midst? If confronted with such a situation they would fight with all they had -- and take help ^{from} any quarter -- as they proved so valiantly in World War II. The whole world knows that. So it is all the more difficult for those of us outside of the Soviet Union to understand why the Soviet political leadership does not seem to grasp the basic facts of that tragic situation.

I hope, as you say, that there is an open door to a just political settlement and a practical "working formula." But I have not seen either yet. Unfortunately, 1985 was marked by an intensification of conflict, with higher casualties on both sides. I can only hope that this is not what the future holds.

As I have said before, if you really want to withdraw from Afghanistan, you will have my cooperation in every reasonable way. We have no desire or intent to exploit the situation in Afghanistan to the detriment of Soviet interests. But it is clear that the fighting can be ended only by the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the return of Afghan refugees to their country, and the restoration of a genuinely sovereign, non-aligned state. The modalities used are of much less importance, so long as they lead to this result. Such a result would have an immediate positive effect on U.S.-Soviet relations and would greatly facilitate progress in many other areas.

The problem of halting superpower military involvement in local disputes, and thus a source of serious tension between our countries, is of course not limited to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan. And I must say candidly that some recent actions by your government are most discouraging. What are we to make of your military support of a local dictator who has declared a war of terrorism against much of the rest of the world, and against the United States in particular? How can one take Soviet declarations of opposition to terrorism seriously when confronted with such actions? And, more importantly, are we to conclude that the Soviet Union is so reckless in seeking to extend its influence in the world that it will place its prestige (and even the lives of some of its citizens) at the mercy of a mentally unbalanced local despot? If that turns out to be the case, then I honestly cannot be sanguine about the future of U.S.-Soviet relations.

You have made accusations about U.S. policy which I cannot accept. My purpose here, however, is not to debate, but to search for a way out of the pattern by which one of us becomes militarily involved, directly or indirectly, in local disputes, and thus stimulates the reaction of the other. This transforms what should be of local concern to a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. As I have said, we believe it is the Soviet Union which has acted without restraint in this respect. You say it is the United

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But agreement as to who is to blame is not necessary to find a solution. The point I would make is that we must find a way to terminate the military involvement, direct and indirect, of both our countries in these disputes, and avoid spreading such involvement to new areas. This was the goal of the proposal I made last October, and I consider it both fair and workable. Let us encourage the parties to these conflicts to begin negotiations to find political solutions, while our countries support the process by agreeing to terminate the flow of weapons and war materiel into the area.

Much of this letter deals with disagreements between us, because it is important to understand them if we are to overcome them. But I would not wish to leave the impression that I feel these are either insoluble or that there has been no progress in improving relations between our countries. On the contrary, I am convinced that the central problems can be solved if we approach them in the proper manner. And I am pleased that we gradually are finding some additional points on which we can agree.

But we do need to speed up the negotiation process and to make it more concrete and practical. Therefore, I would hope that your negotiators in Geneva will soon be in a position to respond in specific fashion to our November proposals, and that the "working formula" to solve the conflict in Afghanistan is in fact workable.

When you announced to the public the ideas contained in your letter of January 14, I made an announcement welcoming them. Our study of that message will shortly be completed and when it is I will be responding to the points you made in it.

Nancy joins me in sending our best regards to you and your wife.

Sincerely,

JMC 9005E
43
Matsuda

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DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 28, 1997
By CRS NARA, Date 7/2/02

No. NSDD 209

COPY #1 ORIGINAL

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMATION

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44

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

matlock

February 4, 1986


~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
THE CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT
THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
THE DIRECTOR OF U.S. INFORMATION AGENCY

SUBJECT: NSDD on Implementing Decisions at the Geneva Summit (U)

The President has approved the attached National Security Decision Directive on implementing decisions at the Geneva Summit. (C)

FOR THE PRESIDENT:


John M. Poindexter

Attachment:
NSDD-209

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 23, 1997
By CXS NARA, Date 7/2/02

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45

Mallock

Authority J. SAUNDERS NSC 3/13/96
BY CAS, NARA, Date 7/2/02

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

February 4, 1986

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 209

IMPLEMENTING DECISIONS OF THE GENEVA SUMMIT (C)

My meetings with General Secretary Gorbachev produced a fresh start in U.S.-Soviet relations in the sense that it established a framework for bilateral negotiations of some of our outstanding differences. It is now our task to make use of this framework to move us toward the goals I have set for U.S.-Soviet relations. This will also be a key component in the substantive preparations for my meeting with Mr. Gorbachev in the United States this year.
(U)

In order to ensure vigorous pursuit of a dialogue and, where appropriate, negotiations in those areas where the Joint U.S.-USSR Statement at Geneva indicated that progress is possible, I hereby designate the following agencies to take the lead in coordinating the United States position and pursuing it actively with representatives of the Soviet Union: (U)

1. Negotiations on Nuclear and Space Arms: The Senior Arms Control Group will continue to have responsibility for coordinating views of U.S. positions to be taken, which will then be reviewed by the National Security Council. (C)

2. Regional Conflicts: The Secretary of State will have responsibility for developing concrete new ways to pursue my initiative to end regional conflicts, as outlined in my speech to the United Nations General Assembly last October, and for conducting regular consultations with the Soviet Union. This issue is a major one, and the Department of State should also take the lead in ensuring that it receives an appropriate share of public attention. (C)

3. People-to-People Contacts and Information Exchange: The Director of the United States Information Agency will have the responsibility for implementing the initiatives I have made in this area. Policy matters will be considered by an Interdepartmental Group chaired by the National Security Council

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2

Staff. I would note in this connection that the areas for expansion of contacts noted in the U.S.-USSR Joint Statement are only a start toward the objective I have set for a radical expansion of contacts. Therefore, efforts should concentrate not merely on implementing those programs to which the Soviets agreed at Geneva, but to expanding their scope and size in accord with the proposals made by the United States before the Geneva Summit.

~~(S)~~

4. Chemical Weapons: The Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency shall, in coordination with the Interdepartmental Group on Chemical and Biological Weapons Arms Control, have primary responsibility for preparing the United States position for talks with the Soviets on verification measures to enforce a chemical weapons ban, and on measures to combat the proliferation of chemical weapons. In case of interagency disagreement, the issues should be referred to the Senior Arms Control Group. ~~(S)~~

5. Risk Reduction Centers: The Staff of the National Security Council, working with the existing ad hoc interagency group on this subject, will retain primary responsibility for the development and implementation of the U.S. approach to be taken in the exploratory, expert-level discussions on the concept of risk reduction centers. ~~(S)~~

6. Thermonuclear Fusion: The Secretary of Energy shall have the responsibility of coordinating the United States position for the study of the feasibility of an international effort to build a prototype fusion power plant. ~~(S)~~

7. Cancer Research: The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in cooperation with the National Institutes of Health, shall be responsible for developing a cooperative program in this area, utilizing the U.S.-USSR Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Medical Science and Public Health as a framework for implementation. ~~(U)~~

8. Environmental Research: The Director of the Environmental Protection Agency will have the responsibility for implementing cooperation in this area, utilizing the U.S.-USSR Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection. ~~(U)~~

9. Humanitarian Issues: The Secretary of State will be responsible for conducting a vigorous effort, based primarily on private diplomacy, for achieving United States objectives in this area. ~~(S)~~

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In all of these areas, the normal interagency process will be utilized to ensure that steps taken are in the interest of the United States. While I wish to ensure that these issues are pursued vigorously with the Soviet Union, all should be discussed and negotiated strictly on their merits. In negotiating with the Soviet Union no artificial deadlines should be set, nor any concessions made merely because another meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev will be scheduled for this year. (S)

Handwritten signature or initials

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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February 3, 1986

ACTION

SIGNED

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN M. POINDEXTER *John*

SUBJECT: NSDD on Implementation of Geneva Summit Agreements

Issue

Whether to sign an NSDD on implementing the Geneva Summit Agreements.

Facts

At your meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva you agreed to pursue negotiations or discussions with the Soviet Union in a number of areas.

Discussion

In order to ensure that the agreements reached at Geneva are pursued vigorously, it is desirable to designate particular officials to see that each is followed up properly. The NSDD which is attached makes such assignments and also cautions that all matters should be negotiated solely on their merits and without artificial deadlines.

Recommendation

OK

No

That you sign the NSDD at Tab A.

Attachment:

Tab A NSDD

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 23, 1997
By CIS NARA, Date 7/2/02

cc Vice President

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Prepared by:
Jack F. Matlock

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON D.C. 2050E

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

January 21, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

SIGNED

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JM*

SUBJECT: NSDD on Implementation of Geneva Summit Agreements

Attached at Tab A is the suggested text of an NSDD to assign responsibility for implementing the Geneva Summit Agreements.

Although thought was given to combining these assignments with matters concerning preparation for the Washington Summit this year, I decided after reflection that it would be preferable to cover the latter after a date has been agreed upon with the Soviets.

If you concur in this judgment and find the NSDD text acceptable, I recommend that you forward it to the President for approval and signature.

Bob ~~L~~ard concurs.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the Memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Approve *[Signature]*

Disapprove _____

Attachments:

Tab I - Memorandum to the President

Tab A - NSDD

DECLASSIFIED

White House Guidelines, August 28, 1997

By *CS* NARA, Date *7/2/02*

CONFIDENTIAL

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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SENSITIVE

Return to
Jack Matlock
~~Admiral John H. Doolittle~~

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CYS 7/2/02

51

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~

February 4, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: JACK MATLOCK *JM*

SUBJECT: Reply to Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter

A Memorandum to the President conveying the draft text of a reply to Gorbachev's handwritten letter to the President is at Tab I. The text of the draft has been slightly revised from the one you saw earlier, following consultation with Lehman, Linhard and Sestanovich.

(Lehman, Linhard and Sestanovich concur.) *JM*

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the Memorandum to the President at Tab I.

Approve *JM* Disapprove

Attachments:

Tab I Memorandum to the President

Tab A Draft Reply to Handwritten Letter from Gorbachev

Tab B Translation of Gorbachev's Handwritten Letter of December 24, 1985

2/13

I will want to give this to President Saturday morning around AFI.

JM

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 28, 1997
By *OKS* NARA, Date *7/2/02*

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52

I



3

2/11/86
7:15 PM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

John -

Sec. Shultz did not have time to look at the letter immediately, but asked me to leave it with him. He will study it tonight and let us know in the morning if he approves.

Attached is the revised text I left with him. It is now much shorter than before, and slightly shorter than Garbachev's.

I did not take all of Palmer's suggestions, but I did cut those passages which he indicated the Secretary felt strongly about.

Jack

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2/11/86

DRAFT REPLY TO HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM GORBACHEV

Dear Mr. General Secretary:

Your letter of December 24, 1985, was most thought-provoking and I would like to share my reactions with you. I have of course also received your letter of January 14, 1986, and will be responding to it shortly. However, since the substance of the latter is already in the public domain, I believe it is well to keep our private communications separate. Some of the issues are of course the same, but I would hope that in this informal fashion we can continue our candid exchange on some of the fundamental questions.

I agree with you that we need to set a specific agenda for action to achieve a steady and -- I would hope -- radical improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. I suggested two such topics in my previous letter, and I would hope that we could agree to add others: agreement on a verification regime that would permit a global ban on chemical weapons is one potential area that comes to mind. There are no doubt others, and I would welcome your suggestions.

Regarding arms reduction in general, I also agree that we must make decisions not on the basis of assurances or intentions but with regard to the capabilities on both sides. Nevertheless, I do not understand the reasoning behind your conclusion that only a country preparing a disarming first strike would be interested in defenses against ballistic missiles. If such defenses prove feasible in the future, they could facilitate further reductions of nuclear weapons by creating a feeling of confidence that national security could be preserved without them.

Of course, as I have said before, I recognize that adding defensive systems to an arsenal replete with weapons with a disarming first-strike capability could under some conditions be destabilizing. That is why we are proposing that both sides concentrate first on reducing those weapons which can be used to deliver a disarming first strike. Certainly, if neither of our countries has forces suitable for a first strike, neither need fear that defenses against ballistic missiles would make a first strike strategy possible.

I also do not understand your statement that what you call "space strike weapons" are "all purpose" weapons. As I understand it, the sort of directed-energy and kinetic devices both our countries are investigating in the context of ballistic missile defense are potentially most effective against point targets moving at high velocity in space. They would be ill-suited for mass destruction on earth, and if one were planning to strike earth targets from space, it does not seem rational to resort to such expensive and exotic techniques. Their destructiveness can

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never approach that of the nuclear weapons in our hands today. Nuclear weapons are the real problem.

Mr. General Secretary, in the spirit of candor which is essential to effective communication, I would add another point. You speak often of "space strike weapons," and your representatives have defined these as weapons which can strike targets in space from earth and its atmosphere, and weapons in space which can strike targets in space or on earth. I must ask, "What country has such weapons?" The answer is, only one: the Soviet Union. Your ABM system deployed around Moscow can strike targets beyond the atmosphere and has been tested in that mode. Your co-orbital anti-satellite weapon is designed to destroy satellites. Furthermore, the Soviet Union began research in defenses utilizing directed energy before the United States did and seems well along in research (and -- incidentally -- some testing outside laboratories) of lasers and other forms of directed energy.

I do not point this out in reproach or suggest that these activities are in violation of agreements. But if we were to follow your logic to the effect that what you call "space strike weapons" would only be developed by a country planning a first strike, what would we think? We see the Soviet Union devoting enormous resources to defensive systems, in an effort which antedates by many years our own effort, and we see a Soviet Union which has built up its counterforce weapons in numbers far greater than our own. If the only reason to develop defensive weapons is to make a disarming first strike possible, then clearly we should be even more concerned than we have been.

We are concerned, and deeply so. But not because you are developing -- and unlike us deploying -- defensive weaponry. We are concerned over the fact that the Soviet Union for some reason has chosen to deploy a much larger number of weapons suitable for a disarming first strike than has the United States. There may be reasons for this other than actually seeking a first-strike advantage, but we too must look at capabilities rather than intentions. And the fact is that we are certain you have an advantage in this area.

Frankly, you have been misinformed if your specialists say that the missiles on our Trident submarines have a capability to destroy hardened missile silos -- a capability your SS-18 definitely has. Current Trident missiles lack the capability for such a role. They could be used only to retaliate. Nor is the Pershing II, which cannot even reach most Soviet strategic weapons, a potential first-strike weapon. Its short flight time is not substantially different from that of the more capable -- and much more numerous -- Soviet SS-20's aimed at our European Allies whom we are pledged to defend and most of whom have no nuclear capability of their own. Our forces currently have a very limited capability to strike Soviet silos, and we are improving this capability only because we cannot accept a

situation in which the Soviet Union holds such a clear advantage in counterforce weaponry. Even if we unfortunately are required to complete all these planned deployments in the absence of a strategic arms accord which limits them, they will not match Soviet weapons with a first-strike capability.

If our defense and military specialists disagree regarding the capability of the weapons on the other side, then by all means let us arrange for them to meet and discuss their respective concerns. They don't have to exchange blueprints or divulge technical secrets, but a frank discussion of their respective assessments and the reasons for them could perhaps clear up those misunderstandings which are not based on fact.

In any event, we have both agreed to the principle of a 50% reduction of nuclear arms. Implementing that agreement is surely the first task of our negotiators at Geneva. Let me stress once again that we remain willing to reduce those weapons systems which the Soviet Union finds threatening so long as the Soviet Union will reduce those which pose a special threat to the United States and its Allies. Our proposals in November included significant movement on our part in this direction and were a major step to accommodate your concerns. I hope that your negotiators will be empowered to respond to these proposals during the current round and to engage us in negotiating which strategic systems are to be included in the 50% reduction.

So far as defensive systems are concerned, I would reiterate what I wrote before: if your concern is that such systems may be used to permit a first-strike strategy, or as a cover for basing weapons of mass destruction in space, then there must be practical ways to prevent such possibilities. Of course, I have in mind not general assurances but concrete, verifiable means which both sides can rely on to avoid these contingencies, neither of which is a part of United States strategy or planning. I honestly believe that we can find a solution to this problem if we approach it in practical fashion rather than debating generalities.

I would like nothing more than to find, by our next meeting, an approach acceptable to both of us to solve this problem. But I believe that will require two things: accelerating negotiations to reach agreement on the way to reduce offensive weapons by 50%, and discussion of concrete ways to insure that any future development of defensive systems cannot be used as a cover for a first-strike strategy or for basing weapons of mass destruction in space.

Regarding regional conflicts, I can see that our respective analyses of the causes are incompatible. There seems little point in continuing to debate those matters on which we are bound to disagree. Instead, I would suggest that we simply look at the current situation in pragmatic terms. Such a look would show two very important facts: that the Soviet Union is engaged in a war

in another country and the United States is not. And furthermore, this war is one which is unlikely to bring any benefit to the Soviet Union. So why is it continued?

Certainly not because of the United States. Even if we wished we do not have the power to induce hundreds of thousands of people to take up arms against a well trained foreign army equipped with the most modern weapons. And neither we nor any country other than the Soviet Union has the power to stop that war. For who can tell the people of another country they should not fight for their motherland, for their independence and their national dignity?

I hope, as you say, that there is an open door to a just political settlement. Of course, we support the U.N. process and hope that it will take a practical and realistic turn. However, 1985 was unfortunately marked by an intensification of conflict. I can only hope that this is not what the future holds.

As I have said before, if you really want to withdraw from Afghanistan, you will have my cooperation in every reasonable way. We have no desire or intent to exploit the situation in Afghanistan to the detriment of Soviet interests. But it is clear that the fighting can be ended only by the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the return of Afghan refugees to their country, and the restoration of a genuinely sovereign, non-aligned state. Such a result would have an immediate positive effect on U.S.-Soviet relations and would help clear the way to progress in many other areas.

The problem of superpower military involvement in local disputes is of course not limited to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan. And I must say candidly that some recent actions by your government are most discouraging. What are we to make of your sharply increased military support of a local dictator who has declared a war of terrorism against much of the rest of the world, and against the United States in particular? How can one take Soviet declarations of opposition to terrorism seriously when confronted with such actions? And, more importantly, are we to conclude that the Soviet Union is so reckless in seeking to extend its influence in the world that it will place its prestige (and even the lives of some of its citizens) at the mercy of a mentally unbalanced local despot?

You have made accusations about U.S. policy which I cannot accept. My purpose here, however, is not to debate, but to search for a way out of the pattern by which one of us becomes militarily involved, directly or indirectly, in local disputes, and thus stimulates the reaction of the other. This transforms what should be of local concern into a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. As I have said, we believe it is the Soviet Union which has acted without restraint in this respect. You say it is the United States.

But agreement as to who is to blame is not necessary to find a solution. The point I would make is that we must find a way to terminate the military involvement, direct and indirect, of both our countries in these disputes, and avoid spreading such involvement to new areas. This was the goal of the proposal I made last October. Let us encourage the parties to these conflicts to begin negotiations to find political solutions, while our countries support the process by agreeing to terminate the flow of weapons and war materiel into the area of conflict.

Mr. General Secretary, there remain many points on which we still disagree, and we will probably never reach agreement on some of them. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the central problems can be solved if we approach them in the proper manner. I have the feeling that we gradually are finding some additional points on which we can agree, and would hope that, by concentrating on practical solutions, we can give greater momentum to this process.

But we do need to speed up the negotiation process if this is to occur. Therefore, I would hope that your negotiators in Geneva will soon be in a position to respond in specific fashion to our November proposals, that the efforts to end the war in Afghanistan will take a practical direction, and that our representatives can make more speedy progress in other important areas.

When you announced to the public the ideas contained in your letter of January 14, I made a statement welcoming them. Our study of that message will shortly be completed and when it is I will be responding to the points you made in it.

Nancy joins me in sending our best regards to you and your wife.

Sincerely,