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EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Gorbachev's Response to the US Nuclear Initiative: Implications for Soviet Strategic Offensive Forces

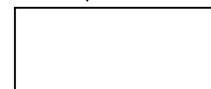
- A major objective of Gorbachev's proposals regarding strategic forces is to maintain centralized authority over nuclear weapons and to respond to pressure from the republics to reduce the economic burden of defense.
- The unilateral Soviet reduction of 1,000 warheads below START levels was motivated in part by a desire to effect similar reductions in US warheads. We can expect continuing proposals for deeper reductions in strategic nuclear forces and program cutbacks, particularly from Yel'tsin. US policymakers will be faced with continuing pressure to reciprocate.
- Gorbachev cancelled modernization of the rail-mobile SS-24; this action probably portends the eventual termination of the rail-mobile SS-24 ICBM program. He also cancelled a new road-mobile ICBM, but did not address several other ballistic missile modernization programs [redacted]
- Because of impending major reductions in the defense industry, the Soviets' capability to modernize strategic forces will deteriorate.
- The need to ease economic and political problems outweighs the interests of the military and defense industry in shaping decisions on reducing Soviet strategic forces. [redacted]

This Executive Brief presents the findings of Intelligence Community representatives at a meeting held on 25 October 1991. It was produced by the National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs, and coordinated with representatives in CIA, State/INR, DLA, NSA, Navy and Air Force.

All portions classified

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Soviet Initiatives

In his speech of 5 October, President Gorbachev announced numerous unilateral Soviet measures relating to strategic offensive arms in response to President Bush's unilateral initiatives.

Gorbachev stated that the Soviets would unilaterally reduce their number of accountable strategic warheads to 5,000 rather than the 6,000 provided for in START. Moreover, he said they would remove 503 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBMs), including 137 missiles with multiple, independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), from alert status. Gorbachev's statement reflects reductions since the September 1990 START data exchange, and therefore includes some missiles that had already been deactivated.

Single RV	MIRVs
SS-11 - 326	SS-17 - 37
SS-13 - 40	SS-19 - 90
	SS-18 - 10
366	137

In addition, Gorbachev announced that the Soviets would:

- Stop development of a small mobile ICBM.
- Not increase the number of MIRVed mobile ICBMs beyond current levels.

- Abandon plans to modernize the rail-mobile SS-24.
- Discontinue out-of-garrison deployments of rail-mobile ICBMs.
- Not maintain Soviet heavy bombers on alert status. (A continuation of an existing Soviet practice.)
- Stop development of a modified nuclear short-range missile for heavy bombers.
- Complete the decommissioning of three nuclear ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs) and decommission three additional SSBNs.

What He Didn't Say

Despite current political and economic pressures within the Soviet Union and recent Soviet statements on forthcoming massive cuts in defense spending, Gorbachev's speech did not address a number of other ongoing strategic programs. For example, he did not address:

- Whether Blackjack bomber production would cease. (The rate of production is low and some analysts believe it will soon stop.)
- Whether SSBN construction would cease. (We judge there are probably modified Delta-IV SSBNs under construction, but there is a chance that the new submarines under

construction are not SSBNs. This program is vulnerable to termination because of anticipated large cutbacks in Soviet defense spending.)

- Whether programs to modernize the silo-based SS-24, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), or road-mobile ICBMs (other than the small mobile ICBM he referred to) would be cancelled.
- Whether deployment of road-mobile ICBMs and new SS-18 ICBMs would be discontinued. [redacted]

If any of these programs already had been cancelled or were in the process of being cancelled, Gorbachev's speech provided an opportunity to publicize such initiatives; however, no announcement was forthcoming, suggesting that they may intend to continue at least some of these programs. Gorbachev may have avoided discussion of these programs, however, because he intends to hold back concessions on them for future negotiations. [redacted]

Programmatic Implications

We do not know which small mobile ICBM Gorbachev was referring to when he said that its development had been halted. It could be the SS-25 follow-on missile we estimated probably had three-warhead and one-warhead options, which we believe is ready for flight-testing; or, it could be another system that we projected would begin flight-testing in the mid-1990s. During meetings in Moscow in

early October, the Soviets declined to clarify this issue. As a result of Gorbachev's statement concerning MIRVed mobile ICBMs, we judge that if the Soviets proceed with testing an SS-25 follow-on missile, it will carry only a single warhead. [redacted]

Gorbachev's pledge that the number of mobile MIRVed ICBMs would not be increased is consistent with Soviet declarations made during the START negotiations that no more than 36 rail-mobile SS-24 ICBMs would be deployed. Judging by the measures Gorbachev announced, we foresee an end to the rail-mobile SS-24 program by the early 2000s, perhaps sooner. [redacted]

Gorbachev provided no indication of the future status of any silo-based MIRVed ICBM, including the SS-24. Indeed, we have recent evidence that the silo-based SS-24 follow-on program is continuing. [redacted]

However modernization of the silo-based version of the SS-24 may be at risk.

- Forty-six of the 56 silo-based SS-24s are currently deployed in Ukraine.
- The program is vulnerable to likely cuts in the defense budget, anticipated problems procuring necessary materials and components, and the potential loss of the final assembly facility in Ukraine.

In any case, the Soviets may plan to eliminate this program as part of deeper reductions in the future. If they retain and modernize the SS-24 silo-based

system in Russia, they will either have to establish a final assembly capability at a Russian facility or pay for production from the Ukrainian facility. [redacted]

The future of the SS-18 modernization program also is in doubt because about one-third of the 154 SS-18 silos earmarked for modernization are located in Kazakhstan and because the final assembly facility for this missile is in Ukraine. [redacted]

While stating that the rail-mobile SS-24 missiles would henceforth remain in their permanent basing areas, Gorbachev did not say the same thing about the road-mobile SS-25 ICBMs. According to [redacted]

[redacted] the Soviets intend to continue deployments of road-mobile ICBMs for survivability reasons. Perhaps field training for the SS-24s can be accomplished by trains leaving garrison without launcher railcars, while SS-25s cannot maintain optimal wartime proficiency without periodic field deployments. [redacted]

We are uncertain what short-range nuclear missile for heavy bombers has been cancelled; it might be the AS-16 missile for the Blackjack or a replacement for the AS-4 missile on older Bear Gs. [redacted]

Military Implications

Soviet reactions to the US proposal to eliminate MIRVed ICBMs have been

decidedly negative. Some Russian officials, however, have been more receptive. Agreeing to this proposal would facilitate rapid progress toward deeper reductions in the total number of warheads, which the Soviets favor. However, it would require the Soviets to abandon their long-standing preference for an advantage in ICBMs. Soviet officials have argued that accepting this US proposal at a 5,000 or 6,000 warhead limit would require costly modernization programs they are not prepared to undertake. [redacted]

The Soviet unilateral reduction of 1,000 warheads below the START level of 6,000 warheads was motivated in part by a desire to effect a similar reduction in US warheads. The Soviets will probably be able to meet most of their traditional world-wide targeting objectives. However, they will fall short of their goals against lower priority targets. Maintaining nuclear warfighting capabilities--previously a major goal of Soviet arms control policies--is probably much less important to the political leadership today. For the Center, and even more so for the Russian Republic, the need to ease economic and political problems outweighs the interests of the military and defense industry in shaping decisions on Soviet strategic forces. [redacted]

Some of the other actions announced by Gorbachev have limited military significance. Well before the speech we had predicted significant reductions of older ICBMs and submarines in preparation for START.

- Most of the ICBMs being removed from alert status are older single-RV systems, and a number of these have already been deactivated.
- The three SSBNs the Soviets were already decommissioning, as well as the three additional SSBNs they announced they would decommission, are aging Yankee-class submarines already slated for dismantlement.

[redacted]

Implications for US Policy

We can expect continuing proposals, particularly from Yel'tsin, for major reductions in strategic forces below START levels, as well as additional program cutbacks. The Intelligence Community will continue to analyze such measures in the context of how the republic and Center leaders view these efforts as part of their larger agenda of dramatically reducing the burden of defense expenditures. It is not clear whether, or at what point, the Soviets will be forced to make major unilateral reductions in their nuclear forces without regard to a reciprocal arrangement, thereby accepting an obvious asymmetry in the nuclear strength of the two nuclear powers. Therefore, US policymakers will be faced with continuing pressure to address the extent to which the US and its Allies should reciprocate. [redacted]

An Uncertain Future

As noted above, we have great uncertainty in predicting the future of Soviet strategic forces. Given these uncertainties, the following tables are not projections of future Soviet strategic forces, but rather portrayals of how General Staff planners might currently envision options for their forces in the late 1990s at the 5,000 and 3,000 accountable warhead level in the light of Gorbachev's responses to the US President's initiative. [redacted]

We have depicted forces that have a traditional mix of ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. In addition, because of recent Soviet statements and a historical dependence on ICBMs, we show forces with greater emphasis on this component of their strategic triad. As the Soviets proceed downward from a force of 6,000 warheads, it is possible that they may move away from a balanced triad towards a force relying more heavily on ICBMs. For comparison purposes we show the 6,000 warhead force projected in NIE 11-3/8-91. [redacted]

We have also shown a 3,000 warhead force depicting Soviet acceptance of the US proposal to de-MIRV land-based ballistic missiles. [redacted]

Factors considered when developing these tables, although not explicitly depicted, include:

- The extent to which modernization of ICBMs and SLBMs can continue given the current political and economic situation. In showing the SS-18, SS-24, and SS-25-class ICBMs and the SS-N-20-class SLBM, we have not explicitly depicted the mix between current and modernized systems.
- To what extent, if any, modified Delta-IV SSBNs will be deployed.
- How force structure would be consolidated under major reductions. For example, in the "ICBM Heavy" projections, all SSBN forces would be consolidated in the Northern Fleet.
- Whether more than one regiment of Blackjack bombers will be deployed. (The tables show the completion of such deployment at one regiment).
- Whether all strategic forces will be removed from Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Kazakhstan.

Illustrative Soviet Strategic Forces at 5,000
Accountable Weapons - Circa 2000

<u>System</u>	<u>Accountable Weapons</u>	<u>5,000 ICBM Heavy Force^a</u>	<u>5,000 Traditional Triad</u>	<u>6,000 NIE 11-3/8-91</u>
SS-18-Class	10	154	154	154
SS-19	6	100	30	40
SS-24-Class	6	92	62	122
SS-25-Class	1	450	414	450
Delta-III/SS-N-18	3	48	128	128
Delta-IV/SS-N-23	4	112	112	112
Typhoon/SS-N-20-Class	6	120	120	120
Mod-Delta/New SLBM	1	0	64	96
Bear G	1	0	14	40
Bear H	8	48	88	88
Blackjack	8	20	20	44
ICBM RVs		3142	2506	3250
SLBM RVs		1312	1616	1648
Bomber Weapons		544	878	1096
Total Weapons		4998	5000	5994

Illustrative Soviet Strategic Forces at 3,000
Accountable Weapons - Circa 2000

<u>System</u>	<u>Accountable Weapons</u>	<u>3,000 ICBM Heavy Force</u>	<u>3,000 Traditional Triad</u>	<u>3,000 No MIRVed ICBM</u>
SS-18-Class	10	88	64	0
SS-24-Class	6	60	40	0
SS-25-Class	1	450	414	450
Delta-III/SS-N-18	3	0	0	160
Delta-IV/SS-N-23	4	96	112	112
Typhoon/SS-N-20-Class	6	80	120	120
Mod-Delta/New SLBM	1	0	64	64
Bear H	8	35	39	84
Blackjack	8	20	20	20
ICBM RVs		1690	1294	450
SLBM RVs		864	1232	1712
Bomber Weapons		440	472	832
Total Weapons		2994	2998	2994

^aNavy believes that based on the emphasis in Gorbachev's response on cuts in ICBM programs and the continued Center-republic uncertainty, an SLBM-heavy force would be a more likely choice for Center planners. [redacted]